

READER

WHY IS THIS *CHICAGO COP* TRAINING POLICE IN EL SALVADOR



The lack of congressional oversight on ITTA—a small police training company founded in Chicago that has trained more than 600 officers in El Salvador—is even more problematic given another fact: the behavior of some of the U.S. officers running the program.

Dana Brozost-Kelleher, Alison Flowers, Ellen Glover, Danielle Mackey, and Annie Nguyen [10](#)

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A new book celebrates the National Portrait Gallery paintings of the Obamas, writes Deanna Isaacs.



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CITY LIFE



Lillstreet's Gallery Shop connects creators and customers. © MOLLY HARRIS

SHOP LOCAL

Lillstreet is the place for functional art

The Gallery Shop offers handmade ceramics, jewelry, textiles and more.

By MOLLY HARRIS

Lillstreet Art Center is a Chicago institution situated in a 40,000-square-foot gear factory in Ravenswood. The building is a considerable step up from its former home in a renovated horse barn.

For 45 years, the center has provided education and training in the arts, including metalsmithing, printmaking, textiles, ceramics, jewelry, and more. There are camps, classes, and workshops available for students of every age. Lillstreet rents studios on the second floor to artists, with some of them remaining in the same studio for upwards of a decade. There is a gallery, an artist residency program, and a community outreach scheme.

It also provides an outlet for local Chicago artists to sell their work.

The Lillstreet Shop is on the ground floor and shares the space with the coffee shop First Slice. The store has evolved over time. According to Lillstreet Gallery Shop director Abby Jenkins, the original building had a gallery, and they were able to sell work from the

studio artists, serving as the genesis for what exists today. Pottery, jewelry, cards, books, toys, clothing, prints, accessories—what's in the shop is almost a recreation of what can be made in the center. The shop even has honey from the ten hives kept on the roof, although Jenkins is quick to point out that they are not in the bee business, and there are not (yet) classes at Lillstreet for beekeeping.

The goal of Lillstreet is to make art as accessible as possible to as many people as possible. First-time classes are always available, and new classes are based on student and teacher suggestions. New offerings include a class on pottery as a political object, and visiting artist workshops for feltmaking. These classes are outside the norm of what one would usually experience in an arts course.

Designer Zhenqi Ong has been taking classes at Lillstreet for more than two years, with a focus on ceramics, and can attest to the impact the shop has on her personal work. "You get to experience and share in something

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CITY LIFE

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 local. You're directly supporting [the artists], and you get inspiration from them for your own projects."

The products for sale at Lillstreet have value, but they fulfill their true purpose when someone uses them in their day-to-day life, Jenkins says. She is a prime example of this mentality; during our interview, she sports custom earrings from Cat Bowyer, a local Chicago artist and her coworker. "Our focus is on exposing the Chicago community to what is being made within."

"The owner [Bruce Robbins] has been really passionate about it, because there is a sort of gap between downtown galleries selling pieces for thousands, and there is a level of inaccessibility to that that I think he's always been aware of," Jenkins says. "Especially in the ceramics world, there is this subset of people who acknowledge pottery is supposed to be used. It can be figurative and sculptural, but it is a functional object. These people specifically create work at a lower price point because they want people to buy it and use it and have it be a part of their lives."

Jenkins is able to count 17 Chicago or Lillstreet artists in the store that come from the ceramics department alone. Looking at the mug wall, their ability to retain liquid is the only thing they have in common. They vary in style and design and color, but Jenkins stresses they were all created in a collaborative environment.

"In the ceramics department we do all of our own firing," Jenkins says. "In order to get your work fired, there is a lot of people who go into it. There is a lot of community to get the work to its final stage. You need other people, and so many people contribute to the work that is coming out of here, even if they are not putting their hands on it to create it. It's this level of immediate connection to the maker that is something I, even as a customer, have never seen."

The value of Lillstreet exists in its ability to bring together artists and customers within the same space to provide beautiful, functional art. "I've seen the distance growing between customer and creator, so having a place like this where you might not even necessarily know what you're going to leave with is incredible because you come in and it's about the discovery," Jenkins says. "And it's rare, because it pushes against the ideal is perfection or exact replication of what is familiar." 

FOOD & DRINK



Punjena vešalica (stuffed pork loin) MATTHEW GILSON FOR CHICAGO READER

RESTAURANT REVIEW

016 Restaurant dials in the peppery, meaty spirit of southern Serbia

A vet of Publican Quality Meats and Tempesta settles in Lincoln Square.

By MIKE SULA

Bojan Milicevic's hometown is best known for two things: thick, sweet, and spicy ancho-like red *adjvarka* peppers, which blanket exterior house walls as they dry each autumn, and September's Roštiljijada, "barbecue week," when the main drag is occupied by hundreds of amateur and professional grillers firing up everything from *cevapcici* to *ustipak*, to whole hogs and lambs, only upstaged by the recordholding pljeskavica, the world's largest Serbian burger.

Milicevic was raised in this crucible of the barbecue arts, beginning as a busboy at the age of 11 in his father's restaurants in the southern Serbian town of Leskovac. At 13 he'd graduated to the grill, building skills that served him after he landed here in his 20s and embarked on a tour of some of the city's meatier kitchens, most recently Publican Quality Meats and Tem-

pesta Market.

After a brief stint in D.C., Milicevic moved to Chicago precisely for the great numbers of Serbs that live here (more than any other city outside Belgrade, as many local Serbs like to say [unverified]). His English wasn't great, but it was good enough to get him through Le Cordon Bleu Chicago. There wasn't (and still isn't) a shortage of Serbian restaurants around town, but Milicevic wanted his own, one that would represent the food of Leskovac in particular. A little over a year ago, he and his childhood best friend, also Bojan (Jovanovic), bought the restaurant that once housed the Bosnian Kiko's in Lincoln Square's Balkan stronghold, inheriting the 4,000-pound smoker that resided in the basement of the accompanying butchery.

In December they opened 016 Restaurant, named for Leskovac's area code, with a menu

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of familiar Serbian dishes done southern style, with a few modern culinary tweaks.

It's not a foam-and-forceps situation, but rarely do most Balkan restaurants roast Slagel Farm chickens, drizzle charred scallion oil over feta-stuffed peppers, or develop a Nashville-style hot chicken sausage with ground ajvarka, let alone offer a cocktail menu built around different Serbian fruit brandies.

You might guess that wrapping caul fat around mushroom-and-cheese-stuffed pork loin to keep it moist and hold in its innards (or the chef's favorite, calf liver with charred cipolini onions, feta, and garlic vinaigrette) comes out of Culinary Applications 101, but that's just the way it's done back home.

If what you're really after is some nice smoked-kissed fingers of beef and veal cevapici, or better, *Leskovacki ustipak*, grilled meatballs larded with house-smoked bacon and smoked gouda, there's not a lot of superfluous technique getting in the way. There's nothing more elemental than the application of woodsmoke to pork loin, with a side of crispy smashed potatoes and cabbage to scrub the

guts.

His pljeskavica is human-sized but ample enough, along with its gouda-and-bacon-stuffed counterpart, both bedded on fat, pillowy pita-like *lepinja*, which also serves as the vehicle for the notorious *komplet lepinja*, a baked brunch bread bowl filled with eggs, kajmak, and house coppa.

For all its carnicentricity, there's a serious bread game afoot at 016. Milicevic's girlfriend, the pastry chef Angela Diaz, developed the branded sourdough boule that houses the braised pork stew *Leskovačka mučkalica*, as well as the savory feta-infused cornbread *proja*, served at brunch with sweet chili butter (she's also running a pop-up in the former deli space with her gluten-free cookie brand You're a Cookie!).

In that spirit, don't come without ordering a *burek*, the coiled phyllo pastry, its crispy layers supporting molten cheese and spinach (but be prepared to wait 35 minutes for it).

With his experience and the inherited infrastructure from Kiko's, Milicevic is looking forward to reopening the deli and rolling out some southern Serbian charcuterie, and a lot



Leskovačka mučkalica (pork stew) in a branded sourdough boule MATTHEW GILSON FOR CHICAGO READER

of other things (but he first needs to develop a government-approved food safety protocol, aka a HACCP plan).

Whatever comes next, Leskovac isn't far away. "Our food is really good," says Milicevic.

"Our food has a soul. But there is technique I can use to present it [in] a little bit modernized way."

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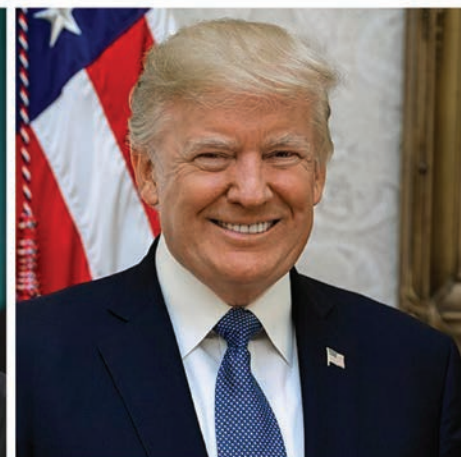
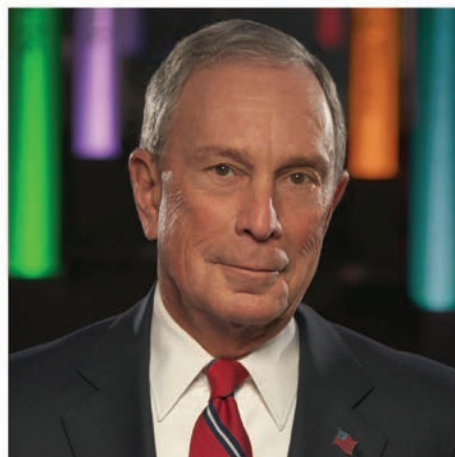
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NEWS & POLITICS



POLITICS

The wit and wisdom of Michael Bloomberg

Centrist Democrats are ignoring his racism and misogyny because they think he can beat Trump.

By **BEN JORAVSKY**

For the last several days I've fallen into the nasty habit of sending horrible stories about Mike Bloomberg to my friends of the centrist persuasion.

Not particularly fond of this. Sort of passive aggressive. Though I justify it as a scientific experiment: How far can my centrist friends bend their core principles until they snap in half?

You might think because I'm a lefty from the Bernie branch of the Democratic Party that I have no centrist friends. Not true—my life is crawling with them.

They're always telling me what they heard on MSNBC or sending me columns by *New York Times* columnists dedicated to the theme that Bernie is too wacky to beat Trump. So, stop supporting him—now!

They're ecstatic over Bloomberg's entrance into the race because he's spending millions and millions and millions of dollars on commercials bashing Trump.

I must admit—it is kind of entertaining to watch Bloomberg needle Trump, as when he

recently tweeted:

"We know many of the same people in NY. Behind your back they laugh at you & call you a carnival barking clown. They know you inherited a fortune & squandered it with stupid deals and incompetence. I have the record & the resources to defeat you. And I will."

Unfortunately, the big problem with Bloomberg is that he has—oh, how to put this?—issues with women and race.

Let's start with his sexism. There are two must-read articles on this topic: the shorter one that ran in *Gawker* in 2013 and a massive deep dive by Michael Kranish in the *Washington Post* this month.

Both articles cite a booklet called *The Portable Bloomberg: The Wit & Wisdom of Michael Bloomberg*—which was assembled by a sycophant in Bloomberg's company and given to the boss in 1990 on the occasion of his 48th birthday.

It starts with the following "editor's note" ...

"Yes, these are all actual quotes. No, nothing has been embellished or exaggerated. And yes,

NEWS & POLITICS

Being rich isn't the only thing Bloomberg and Trump have in common.

■ BLOOMBERG PHILANTHROPIES; SHEALAH CRAIGHEAD

some things were too outrageous to include.”

The booklet includes such words to live by as: “Make the customer think he’s getting laid when he’s getting fucked.”

And: “A good salesperson asks for the order. It’s like the guy who goes into a bar, and walks up to every gorgeous girl there and says ‘Do you want to fuck?’ He gets turned down a lot—but he gets fucked a lot, too.”

And: “If women wanted to be appreciated for their brains, they’d go to the library instead of to Bloomingdale’s.”

In addition, Bloomberg’s company has been sued by several women employees over the years, including a sales employee named Sekiko Garrison.

According to Gawker, Bloomberg “is reported to have conceded saying ‘I’d do her’ in relation to Garrison, but he insisted that he thought ‘do’ meant to have a personal relationship with someone. Other reports from the deposition [related to Garrison’s lawsuit] say Bloomberg almost stormed out of the proceedings when the opposing attorney asked him if he thought the porn film *Debbie Does Dallas* meant Debbie has a personal relationship with everyone from Dallas.”

I know this is a serious topic, but that is one clever lawyer.

Apparently, Bloomberg has a particular aversion to employees who get pregnant.

Garrison alleges that Bloomberg told her “Kill it!” when she told him she was pregnant.

Bloomberg’s spokesman denies he said “kill it,” though the *Post* quotes someone who claims he heard Bloomberg say it.

Now, I realize these comments don’t square with the Democrats’ promise—in the #MeToo era—to take a strong stand against sexual harassment and predatory behavior in the workplace.

On the other hand, President Obama—the lodestar of centrists—has cautioned Democrats not to be too “woke” if they want to beat Trump.

Guess that means putting up with the “wit and wisdom” of billionaires who can self-finance their campaigns.

Then there’s the matter of Bloomberg’s curious attitude toward the connection between young Black men and crime. Which boils down to this:

In order to stop the latter, we must mass arrest the former, even when they’ve done nothing wrong.

Or as Bloomberg put it in remarks delivered in 2015: the majority of murderers and murder victims “fit one M.O. You could just take the description, Xerox it and pass it out to all the cops. They are male, minorities, 15 to 25 [years old].”

Bloomberg noted that people complained that “we put all the cops in the minority neighborhoods. Yes, that’s true. Why do you do it? Because that’s where all the crime is.”

“And the way you get the guns out of the kids’ hands is to throw them up against the wall and frisk them.”

Bringing new meaning to the word chutzpah, Trump, of all people, tweeted: “WOW, BLOOMBERG IS A TOTAL RACIST!”

This reminds me of the refrain I hear from *New York Times* columnists about Bernie being unelectable because Trump will call him a socialist. When told that Trump will say that about all the Democratic candidates, the columnists say: yes, but in Bernie’s case it’s true.

So, if Trump calls all the Democratic candidates racist, in Bloomberg’s case . . .

Now, I’m not saying Bloomberg’s a racist—though I may have done just that.

And I realize that in the Obama age of being “unwoke,” we’re not supposed to give a shit if we offend our base because it’s all about winning swing voters in Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Michigan, etc.

Still, I’m not sure how Bloomberg’s going to win over those swing voters once Trump starts airing “kill it” commercials. As you know he will.

On the other hand, Bloomberg promises to spend billions on commercial after commercial blasting Trump.

So, who knows—after hearing all those commercials, swing voters may just raise their hands and say *no más*—like Roberto Durán in his fight against Sugar Ray Leonard.

Guess that’s why my centrist friends are willing to look the other way regarding Bloomberg’s past comments about race and women.

Looks like they have a lot in common with the MAGA hatters. Forget all the big talk of principles—winning is everything.

I’m embarrassed to say that in my weaker moments, I sort of agree. ■

🐦 @joravben



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HEROES, TERRORISTS, AND THE POLICE

The lack of congressional oversight on ITTA—a small police training company founded in Chicago that has trained more than 600 officers in El Salvador—is even more problematic given another fact: the behavior of some of the U.S. officers running the program.

By DANA BROZOST-KELLEHER, ALISON FLOWERS, ELLEN GLOVER, DANIELLE MACKEY, AND ANNIE NGUYEN

Additional reporting by Sam Stecklow and Matilda Vojak

Officer Salvador Enrique Chavez stood ready to apprehend a colleague accused of murder.

It was December 29, 2017. The 40-year-old was two months from celebrating his 18th year on the Salvadoran police force. As a member of the SWAT-style unit called the Grupo de Reaccion Policial (GRP), he represented the “authentic elite” that smashed

through doors, rappelled down walls, brandished semiautomatics and hunted bad guys, mostly gang members. Chavez had been trained in everything from explosives to wilderness orientation.

But his resume particularly stood out for another reason: Chavez had been selected as one of five officers to work with the International Tactical Training Association (ITTA), a small

police training company founded in Chicago in 2012 that set up shop in El Salvador almost five years ago, and has since trained more than 600 officers. ITTA conducts counterterrorism and military tactical “bespoke training solutions” for law enforcement abroad—and Chavez was one of the company’s local trainers in its El Salvador operations.

At least twice in his career, Chavez had

received honorable mentions from top police brass for making high-profile arrests. Now he was instructed to do it again.

It was about 4:30 AM. Five hours earlier, when the GRP’s holiday party was winding down, a group of his colleagues had given another officer a ride home in a police truck. En route, GRP member Juan Josue Castillo, alias Samurai, had allegedly shot the woman

Chicago police officer and ITTA president Aaron Cunningham in El Salvador

BY ANSP EL SALVADOR

they were taking home, officer Carla Ayala, an internal investigator of misconduct allegations, according to court documents.

The truck had sped back to the unit's headquarters and the other officers jumped out, leaving the keys in the ignition and Samurai with Ayala bleeding in the backseat. Samurai had climbed behind the wheel and sped away. The truck had GPS, but no one followed him. In a rural area, Samurai had allegedly shot Ayala again, killing her, and buried her, court documents say. He had called a colleague at headquarters to say he was returning to base.

That is when Chavez and a partner were ordered to block his exit once he returned, according to court documents.

Until the night she was killed, Ayala, like Chavez, had given her life to the force. Their trajectories mirrored each other: She was one year younger than him, had been an officer one year longer than him.

This was the decisive moment. All of Chavez's training would show.

But, the Salvadoran Attorney General's office now alleges, Chavez let Samurai go.

Samurai drove in, parked, walked up to a GRP commander and handed over the keys. Then he walked toward a main street. Minutes later, according to court documents, Chavez and his partner caught up with Samurai on the side of the road. They traded words. Samurai got into a grey Toyota Corolla driven by his brothers-in-law and drove away.

Police again stopped them before they escaped the city, and arrested Samurai's brothers-in-law, who now await trial. But Samurai, drunk and with only one sandal—at some point he had lost a shoe—evaded capture once again. He remains at large.

The next morning, the deputy director of police moved Chavez out of the GRP, to a low-profile post at a municipal station, according to the transfer order and Chavez's internal personnel file, shared with the *Reader* by a PNC official who requested anonymity for fear of retribution. Chavez has since been placed on "temporarily inactive" status while he awaits trial, charged with breach of duties. In an interview with the *Reader*, he said that the charges are unfair. "I followed the order I was given," he said. "We did what we were supposed to do but unfortunately we couldn't detain the suspect."

Meanwhile, the U.S. company that Chavez trained for, ITTA, claims to be closely connected to the U.S. Departments of State and Defense. "Always on Mission," per its tagline, the company trains in various countries, and is comprised of current and former U.S. police officers and

federal agents, including its president, Aaron Cunningham, a 22-year veteran of the Chicago Police Department (CPD). With more than 100 honorable mentions and awards, Cunningham holds another distinction: He sits among the top 0.6 percent of Chicago officers with the most complaints from citizens, according to the Citizens Police Data Project, which houses public police misconduct data.

Chicago police records from 2004-2016 show that Cunningham has used force, mostly against Black Chicagoans, more frequently than 90 percent of other officers. Misconduct allegations against Cunningham show claims of unconstitutional policing—unlawful entry and search, confiscation or stealing of property, verbal abuse, planting drugs, false arrest, and assault. Although consequences for such alleged police misconduct are rare, Cunningham was disciplined four times between 2000 and mid-2016 following now-closed investigations into his conduct—only 1.3 percent of officers were disciplined as often during that period.

John Lindsay-Poland, a U.S. analyst and specialist in Latin America, has concerns about foreign officers receiving training from U.S. officers. Poland describes the situation as exporting abusive U.S. policing practices to legitimize similar abuses abroad. "We have a police violence problem in this country, and we also have an issue of American exceptionalism where we think we are the best," Lindsay-Poland said in an interview with the *Reader*. "Those two things together often mean that we export problems to other countries that have their own problems. Sometimes it's embedded in the language of how law enforcement is discussed. How crime is discussed. How people are discussed."

Currently assigned to CPD's fusion center, a joint federal-municipal hub for collecting and analyzing information on potential national security threats, Cunningham is also amply trained by the U.S. government, the product of a post-9/11 reality in which federal agencies integrate with municipal police forces under the banner of counterterrorism.

Meanwhile, the Salvadoran Civilian National Police (PNC) have perfected "strategies designed to violate fundamental rights . . . [as] a mechanism of social control," in the words of one security analyst. Supposedly aimed at gangs, the approach has backfired, creating bigger gangs while victimizing an untold number of young people in poor communities. A 2019 report by the country's human rights ombudsman analyzed an "emblematic" sample of 116 people executed by state security forces between 2014 and 2018. The victims' ages ranged from 13 to 46. The average number of bullets in victims' bodies was nine. Sixty percent were

killed in broad daylight. One-third were tortured before death. One was decapitated. The police claimed all victims were gang members; the report found that, in fact, many were not. The report also found that police harassed and threatened the surviving family members or witnesses into silence. The officers involved in the 116 executions were mostly not prosecuted or found innocent; five officers were found guilty.

Cunningham has not shied away from advocating for aggressive police tactics. "It should not surprise that police work entails taking a life to save or protect others," he wrote in a July 2016 Facebook post. "And this burden is not light. But society fundamentally depends on its government to exercise just and legitimate force else the law becomes a comedy. It has been this way for all of modern civilization. Do we want to be civilized or savage?"

He echoed this sentiment in commentary about the Salvadoran government's repressive security strategy, writing in a June 2016 post that policing should not be a "simple matter of killing and capturing gang members" but that "cruelty against the wicked on the behalf of the public is necessary in certain situations. . . . There can be no rest for the wicked in #ElSalvador."

Neither the Chicago Police Department, Fraternal Order of Police, nor the individual officers named in this story responded to requests for comment.

ITTA has a bizarre history in El Salvador. It also has a strange role in the constellation of U.S. training for foreign police. It is a private contractor, independent of the federal government but run by officers who are the product of post-9/11 federal training. And because ITTA doesn't operate on government funds, the company isn't subject to congressional oversight.

Congress began keeping tabs on what exactly the U.S. pays for after U.S.-trained, anti-communist state security forces committed heinous crimes in Cold War-era Latin America. Communism has been replaced by terrorism in the new geopolitical landscape—and ITTA has built its reputation on this new paradigm, overseen by no one.

ITTA COMES TO TOWN

In 2015, the PNC faced a crisis: an average of 52 officers a month were deserting the force, after 81 had been killed by gang members in the previous year.

But the force didn't have the budget to react. The Salvadoran PNC relies on foreign governments to be able to train its nearly 29,000 officers, according to Commissioner José Orlando

Arévalo Rivera, who was until 2019 the director of the Center for Institutional Formation and Training (CFCI). The CFCI is a small academy inside the PNC, and along with the National Academy for Public Security (ANSP) they make up the police's internal training apparatus—and they never have enough money.

Then, a South Korean police superintendent named Kim Eil Kwon swept in and suggested they turn to ITTA, according to a report from the Salvadoran police academy. Kwon, who was in El Salvador implementing a video surveillance system donated by his government, said he was a member of ITTA, a global company run by experienced U.S. police officers, and that the company would train for free, said CFCI director of foreign assistance Jorge Ventura.

On September 25, 2015, academy authorities approved ITTA's proposed course, "Tactical Use of Force & Police Survival." To date, the company has conducted at least 14 sessions and trained officers from most units, according to ANSP documents. Each course lasts one week and costs the PNC \$6,840.00 in "logistics and food."

A September 2015 pamphlet provided by the ANSP defines the course objective as "giving participants techniques and tactics necessary to allow them to react effectively in an incident that puts their lives at risk." Specific goals include improving the use of force and firearms control, and "detention tactics that involve situations of lethal force." The course also covers first aid.

The ANSP leadership has denied seven requests for interviews, from December 2018 until February 2020, about the specific course content regarding use of force and the role of the U.S. trainers, some of whom appear to be active federal agents. It has posted numerous photos of ITTA trainings to what appears to be an official Flickr account.

The PNC has also denied repeated requests for documentation under the Salvadoran freedom of information law. In April 2019, the *Reader* began an appeals process, and on February 4, 2020, the country's arbiter of such disputes, the Institute for Access to Public Information, ruled that the police must provide documentation within eight days. But as of the publication of this article, the PNC has not done so.

U.S. training for Salvadoran police is generally run through the U.S. federal government, which increasingly contracts third parties to train on U.S. dollars. Although serious questions have been raised about the lack of transparency of this strategy, any training done with U.S. money is subject to oversight, like the Leahy Law, which prohibits state and defense agencies from providing any military assistance to foreign security units that have



Cunningham training now-dissolved elite unit Grupo de Reaccion Policial (GRP)
BY ANSP EL SALVADOR

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violated human rights with impunity.

But it seems ITTA lacks oversight for two reasons: because, although it appears to have tight federal connections, it has no official relationship with any agency. And, because it says it does its work for free, a claim echoed by Salvadoran officials.

The company's wide web of U.S. connections is evident in a list of ITTA instructors at counterterrorism conferences it organized in South Korea in 2013 and 2014, almost all of whom were current or former U.S. military or federal agents who represented, the company promised, "the most experienced members of the counter-terror and homeland security community." Among them was Bryan Jang, identified as an active agent with Homeland Security Investigations who, by October 2017, was in El Salvador training the PNC through ITTA—and has continued doing so as recently as November 2019.

Since 2012, the company had conducted counterterrorism trainings for the South Korean police, and its social media posts indicate possible past presence in Myanmar and Lebanon. It sometimes serves as liaison between those forces and U.S. federal agencies; the company coordinated a visit by the Korean police to the Department of Homeland Security in Chicago's Cook County, for instance.

In June 2017, company president Cunningham suggested a specific federal link with their El Salvador work when he tweeted: "We feel proud to be part of the alliance @PNC_SV @ANSP_ElSalvador @StateINL,"—the U.S. federal Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL).

Yet in a statement to the *Reader*, INL disavows ITTA.

"INL does not have a relationship with ITTA," a State Department official told the *Reader* in an e-mail. "INL is aware that ITTA teaches courses at the ANSP police academy. Those courses and ITTA do not receive funding from INL, and the Salvadoran police provide the trainees and ANSP facilities."

Yet in 2016, the U.S. federal government did open its checkbook indirectly for the company, when the police academy ran out of money to cover the logistical costs of more ITTA courses, according to academy officials. Academy officials asked INL to donate the needed support. INL paid for logistics for three courses, including food for all trainers and trainees, lodging for interpreters, salaries for interpreters, and lodging for the visiting ITTA officers, according to Ventura, CFCI director of foreign assistance. The Salvadorans who received the course, 120 special forces officers, came from two units that had recently been implicated in extreme human rights abuses, the GRP and the Specialized Reaction Force (FES). But all participating officers in those three courses were vetted by the INL to comply with the Leahy Law, said Ventura.

The company flashes other, albeit unofficial, legitimacy. For example, ITTA apparently provided "crucial training for the adventure challenge devised by Discovery Channel" for an ex-Navy Seal in the *Manhunt* TV show, according to Cunningham.

It's that kind of calling card, along with the company's now-dissolved "International Tactical Training Association Store, Inc." (according to Illinois Secretary of State records) and its glossy ad-based trade magazine, *Tactical Solutions*, that helped launch it effortlessly into the heart of the Salvadoran police academy. And one of its first acts after arriving was something

it would have been barred from had it been officially sponsored by the U.S. government: training the unit behind Carla Ayala's murder, the GRP.

The unit lost U.S. government support after a group of GRP officers committed a massacre in March 2015. It was only the latest of years of abuses for which the force was infamous, including evidence that the unit shrouded "multiple" death squads. The U.S. responded to the massacre by taking the rare step of cutting off all training and aid to the unit, according to a State Department reply to a June 2018 Congressional request for information.

Six months after the massacre, ITTA arrived. It set about training GRP officers, among the other units, according to academy documents released to the *Reader*. Then, the company took one of its five local trainers, Chavez, from the unit.

It was a striking affront to U.S. efforts to avoid supporting foreign security forces involved in crimes. It also was a risk, given the GRP's infamous reputation—a danger made manifest when, two years later, Ayala was allegedly murdered after the GRP holiday party in circumstances involving an ITTA trainer. The murder was one of the biggest scandals to ever rock the police, and the GRP was disbanded two months later.

The FES, the other special forces unit that ITTA trained in 2016, was disbanded in 2017 after journalists revealed the unit was coordinating death squads via WhatsApp. (The following year, CNN reported that the FES also received U.S. federal support.)

Enrique Chavez was a student in ITTA's first course. "At first, they weren't very aware of our reality here, of how the gangs operate," Chavez said in an interview with the *Reader*. "They understood it more like maybe how it is for you in the United States—that all police officers have cars and they don't live in isolated rural areas."

Chavez, who said he led six ITTA trainings, said the course's self-defense content is something the PNC was desperate for when the company arrived. Learning to evade knife or firearm attacks, or to escape from restraints, handcuffs, or the trunk of a car if kidnapped, is "very accepted" in the academy "because many colleagues have had experiences like this that they somehow survived. And maybe some other colleagues weren't able to survive because they didn't have certain knowledge," he said.

The concern is what exactly ITTA trains regarding use of force, and what the federal agents and agencies informally connected with the company are doing in El Salvador.

Although ANSP leadership refused to discuss the company, the academy's curriculum director acknowledged that the Salvadorans lacked

crucial information. "It seems like no one has background records on ITTA, but instead, it was them who made the first approach and an offer that was accepted, given the difficult circumstances" faced by the police at the time, wrote ANSP curriculum director Luisa Carolina Arevalo Herrera in an e-mail to the *Reader*.

That lack of information—and of U.S. oversight on the company—is problematic, given the records of the U.S. officers who run ITTA.

'A HIGHLY DECORATED OFFICER'

ITTA president Aaron Cunningham's troubled history with the Chicago Police Department shows more civilian complaints than the majority of other officers, including repeated allegations of unconstitutional policing.

An alumnus of Loyola University with an undergraduate degree in Philosophy, 52-year-old Cunningham has been on Chicago's police force since 1998. Cunningham has not shied from the public view, presenting at conferences and serving on the Fraternal Order of Police's Lodge 7 public relations committee in 2017. He is married to another Chicago police officer, Sung Joo Lee, a vice president with ITTA. The couple selected Korean folk-art tigers for their individual Facebook profile pictures; such tigers are widely portrayed as symbols of superiority that ward off evil spirits. (ITTA itself has a spotty social media presence from Facebook to Pinterest, with disabled YouTube and Instagram accounts.)

Lee is also a 20-year Chicago police veteran with a significantly less-marred track record of only three complaints, two from civilians and one from another officer, none sustained or disciplined. Her track record in court, however, is more troubled.

While on-duty in 2001, Lee lost control of her unmarked patrol car on Chicago's Eisenhower Expressway and collided with another car, paralyzing a man from the waist down. The case led to a \$17.6 million settlement for the injured citizen and a jury finding that Lee was "willful and wanton" in her actions, a legal standard that exceeds mere negligence. Lawyers in the case argued Lee should not have joined in the pursuit because she was not assigned to the unit involved in the chase, and there were already 10-20 patrol cars taking action.

Cunningham's own career mirrors the evolution of U.S. policing under the War on Terror. He describes himself in public bios as "a highly decorated officer" and counterterrorism expert who has worked extensively with federal agencies and holds accreditations from the

FBI and Departments of State and Defense, and has “directed and trained basic and advanced courses in firearms use in numerous national and international conferences.”

Along with his wife, Cunningham has also worked with a purported NRA-member training program, Spartan Tactical Training Group, located in a Chicago suburb. The outfit is run by ex-CPD cop John Krupa who was fired in 2009 for planting drugs and disobeying investigators’ orders. Krupa’s official blog for Spartan is called “Will Shoot.” The group claims to have trained members from hundreds of law enforcement offices and federal agencies across the country, including ICE, DOD, and the Secret Service.

Another ITTA vice president, Lawrence Lujan, also has federal training—and a colorful complaint history. Currently a lieutenant, Lujan describes himself as a “public servant,” past SWAT team leader and graduate of the FBI national academy. He has also served as a chief tribal judge and was appointed to the Texas Supreme Court’s Permanent Judicial Commission for Children, Youth and Families. Over his 30 years with the El Paso Police Department, his complaints from fellow officers have ranged from harassment, stalking, bullying, and altering reports. Lujan was exonerated of these claims.

Cunningham also has faced misconduct complaints from colleagues. The allegations include missing court appearances, for which he was suspended two days, and losing his CPD gun, for which he was reprimanded, according to city data. In one incident, cocaine was found in Cunningham and another accused officer’s squad car. Cunningham and the officer told investigators they never saw any contraband. The investigator, a sergeant assigned to the officers’ unit, wrote in his report that it was “possible that a civilian placed the contraband in the vehicle sometime during the night between shifts” and found that Cunningham and the other co-accused officer “performed their duties according to department policy.”

Civilian complaints against Cunningham demonstrate allegations of violating citizens’ constitutional rights with illegal search and entry. In 2000, a complaint record reported that Cunningham and another officer pulled over two Black women, ages 73 and 74. The complainants said both officers verbally abused them, which the officers denied, and searched the glove compartment without warrant or permission. Cunningham then told one of the women to pull up her shirt, “so he could observe the waistband of her pants,” according to CPD records. The reporting sergeant who investigated the complaint determined there was probable cause to search the women because

the driver had an expired license. The various allegations associated with this complaint were either not sustained or exonerated—a common outcome as 93 percent of allegations against police officers do not result in disciplinary action, according to public misconduct data spanning three decades.

Cunningham’s other complaint records include many accusations of false arrest. In October 1999, a 53-year-old man filed a complaint against Cunningham and another officer for placing him under false arrest by planting drugs on him and saying, “you’re Black, tell us where are the drugs and guns and we’ll let you go.” The complaint was not sustained, favoring the officers’ account.

Chicago is “under-incarcerating” Black youth, Cunningham wrote in a Facebook post. “The vast majority of Chicago’s gang members reside in these neighborhoods [Englewood, Garfield, Austin, Lawndale]. Young African-American males who rarely graduate high school and find themselves in prison by age 30. Most are serial criminal offenders with lengthy criminal histories. Are we under-incarcerating, over-incarcerating, or ‘mass incarcerating’ this population effectively? I think I have made it abundantly clear that we under-incarcerate violent crime in Chicago. Most victims will never be rendered justice in our courts.”

But Cunningham himself is no stranger to the justice system. He’s been a defendant in five lawsuits between 2005 and 2013, with a mixed bag of outcomes, including two jury verdicts in his favor, two settlements, and one dismissal. In the lawsuits, Cunningham is accused of participating in a hate crime, physical assault, verbal abuse, unlawful entry, stolen property, and property damage.

The daughter of one complainant from a 2006 lawsuit, which was settled for about \$20,000, remembers Cunningham specifically. A teenager at the time, she said she was in the middle of playing the video game *Mortal Kombat* when “a big swarm, a gang of them” burst into their home in Robbins, Illinois, a Chicago suburb.

Complainant Roseshell Brown recalls thinking, they’re going to “kill us up in this apartment. They were terrorizing my place.”

The lawsuit alleges that the officers did not have a proper search warrant and that there was no evidence of illegal activity at the residence when they destroyed, damaged, and stole property. In an interview for this story, Brown remembers the officers yelling and pointing their guns at the heads of everyone in the house, including children. One of the kids had a prosthetic leg, according to Brown, and she remembers the officers stepping on it.

In another 2008 lawsuit, for which the vic-

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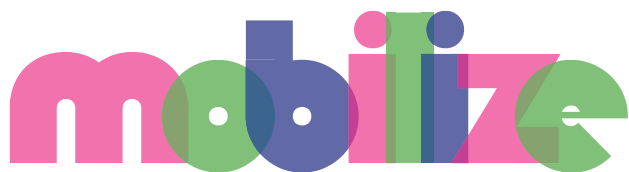
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Theology at Chicago
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February 21
6pm - 8pm
Brave Space Alliance
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5:30pm - 8:30pm
Helix Cafe
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Illinois Supreme Court Justice Forum

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March 4
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Illinois State Capital
Building
301 S. 2nd Street
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tims also received a settlement, Cunningham was among a group of officers accused of breaking into a woman's house and using pepper spray, which leaked into her four-month-old daughter's nursery. When she requested medical attention for her daughter, officers denied her, according to the complaint.

"I couldn't breathe," the plaintiff, who asked not to be named for safety reasons, remembers. "I was shaking and crying. But I kept telling the cops that my baby was inside."

The police searched the residence and threatened to take the woman's child away to the Department of Children and Family Services, according to the lawsuit. "They told me, 'Anything we find, we'll charge you and your baby will go to DCFS,'" she remembers.

After the officers left, the plaintiff and her daughter's father started cleaning up the apartment and noticed the \$8,000 cash they earned after selling one of their cars was gone, according to the lawsuit. The plaintiff then said she saw that her purse had been rummaged through and six dollars she had in her wallet, saved for some weekend ice cream, was gone.

"I said, 'They took my fucking six dollars! My petty six dollars, what do they need with that?'" she said.

They also unlawfully searched her car and took her keys and a gold ring from her home, according to the lawsuit.

"It's something that's going to stay with me," the complainant said. "You can never forget something like that."

But to Cunningham, an outspoken critic of Chicago's gang violence, his activities are part of maintaining civil order—principles he has transported to ITTA's work in El Salvador. On social media, he consistently broadcasts content that blames a rise of violent crime in Chicago on weak political leadership, gang activity, and the restrictions placed on police. In a July 2016 post, Cunningham writes that criminal gangs do not outmatch the police but "persist only where the political will to make them back down is absent."

rights lawyer at the University of Central America. Statistics were particularly concerning in 2016—one year into ITTA's use-of-force trainings—when 59 alleged gang members were killed for every one police or soldier. "This unusual disparity in casualties can only point to a disproportionate use of lethal force," wrote security analyst Jeannette Aguilar. A UN Special Rapporteur said the statistics "could be considered as extrajudicial killings."

On his Facebook page, ITTA president Cunningham has repeatedly praised the PNC. He has written that Salvadoran gangs are "akin to a criminal insurgency with aspirations to power not unlike the Taliban of Afghanistan. These gangs are equally brutal and are rapidly acquiring the tactics and methods of terror organizations."

Such language "exhorts the use of extralegal practices" while making the problem far worse, said analyst Aguilar in an interview with the *Reader*. "The grave human rights violations the police commit in stigmatized communities, and the terror they sow, makes these communities reject the police and the government just like they did during the [Salvadoran civil] war."

Congressman Jim McGovern also compares the situation to the war, which ended in 1992. "We're seeing today excesses that should cause all of us great concern," he said in an interview with the *Reader*. "And when you raise issues to our government, it's like back in the 1980s when we raised abuses to our Embassy and our State Department: they'd explain it away."

The result is an internal police culture in which officers see themselves as heroes hunting terrorists. Under that worldview, the job of ensuring respect for the rule of law—as Carla Ayala was tasked with doing before her murder—becomes very dangerous.

On Sept 11, 2018, after nearly one year of searching, officials confirmed that they had unearthed Ayala's remains. Samurai is believed to be in hiding in Mexico or Guatemala, and his motive for allegedly killing his colleague is still unknown.

Ayala's mother, Maria Isabel Palacios, believes her daughter died for her integrity. "Why did they do it? She was an investigator in the police. They say they set a trap for her, they set her up," Palacios said in her cinder-block home in urban San Salvador, where she is raising Ayala's two teenage sons. "There's not even a word for what they did to her," she said. "I won't stop suffering until I die." ■

Danielle Mackey's reporting was made possible by a grant from the Fund for Investigative Journalism and a fellowship with the Schuster Institute for Investigative Journalism, with support from the Ford Foundation.

HEROES VS. TERRORISTS

To address the crisis of officer desertion from the police force, Salvadoran authorities landed on a geopolitically savvy fix: In 2015, the country's Supreme Court declared gangs to be "terrorists," while a simultaneous PNC campaign marketed the police as "heroes." The U.S. Embassy aided in this campaign.

Cushioned by that bellicose framing, the PNC has killed more than 2,000 civilians since 2013, according to Arnau Baulenas, a human



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VISUAL ARTS

Drawn together

The Hun's homoerotic art—which inspired generations of gay men with its sex-positive themes—finds a new home at Chicago's Leather Archives & Museum.

By **TONY PEREGRIN**

Long before smartphones provided immediate access to porn and the ubiquitous “dick pic,” gay men were limited to physique magazines, adult bookstores, and covert illustrations produced by Bill Schmeling (also known as “The Hun”) and his more popular contemporary, Tom of Finland, to view hardcore expressions of gay male desire—all of which were taboo 50 years ago, if not against the law.

Today, the work of Schmeling—once obtainable only in discreet, plain-wrapped packaging via mail order—is available for in-person, public viewing at the Leather Archives & Museum (LA&M) in Chicago, which acquired the collection in the summer of 2019.

According to LA&M's executive director Gary Wasdin, Schmeling's work, with its depictions of fearless, sex-positive acts, will educate and titillate viewers as it first did in

the 1960s, perhaps even more so today in an age marked by factory-style porn where live streaming platforms means everyone is his/her/their own adult content studio.

“Intense is probably the word that comes to most peoples’ minds when they see Bill’s art,” Wasdin says. “People see these images and instantly think of Tom of Finland because his work is so iconic. Bill’s work is in that general style of exaggerated hypermasculine art, but it is more raw, aggressive, and much more sexual, with depictions of kink play, BDSM, and lots of bodily fluids.”

Beyond Schmeling's portrayal of “dangerous” fantasies featuring “tormented” men in brutal and often compromising situations—a trademark of the Hun's style—was his penchant for drawing interracial sex scenes, an element that made his work all the more innovative, especially for the time. In fact, Schmeling was white and his husband, Roland, an inspiration for a solid portion of his work, was African American.

“I think it's just amazing to see art like the Hun's and realize that people were pretty fucking creative, and despite the challenges of the time, people were doing some amazing stuff and enjoying life,” Wasdin says. “These artists and photographers are pioneers who put themselves out there to make this material accessible for all of us.”

“The Bill ‘The Hun’ Schmeling Collection” encompasses tens of thousands of items, from personal correspondence to sketches to original artwork. “Archives generally measure collections by feet, not by item,” Wasdin says when pressed for a more specific number to describe the scope of the collection. “The Hun collection is probably 200 linear feet, packed mostly in bankers’ boxes, and then of course, the art is stored separately from that.”

In August 2018, Wasdin began the delicate process of discussing the acquisition of the collection from Schmeling, who at the time was storing it rather indiscriminately, from attic to basement, in his two-story house in Portland, Oregon. It took about a year of conversations with the 81-year-old artist before he granted the release of his life's work to the LA&M.

“We came to an agreement to have his full collection come here—meaning Bill didn't want to parcel out pieces here or there—and from a researcher's standpoint that is something we're always anxious to do,” Wasdin

says. Schmeling's donation included not only the entirety of his collection of illustrations and comics, but also the ability to use his images and to sell merchandise. (And, yes, there is a gift shop on-site where attendees may purchase anthologies of his work, comic books, and greeting cards).

In July 2019, Wasdin, his archivist, and a LA&M board member traveled to Schmeling's home to pack up the collection and prepare it for shipping to Chicago. “When Bill first met me he said, ‘You have really small feet!’ As you see in the comics, the Hun had quite a fetish for feet,” explains Wasdin with a good-natured laugh. “The whole experience was phenomenal. He was so warm and friendly.” Schmeling—who suffered from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease—passed away on September 12, 2019.

Visitors to the LA&M, from the casual viewer to the academic researcher, are granted access to the collection as long as prior notice is given to the museum. “This collection is approachable from a lot of different angles,” Wasdin says. “It could be of interest to someone studying the history of gay pornography to someone researching the evolution of BDSM and kink and its growing acceptance in the U.S., to someone writing a novel set in gay New York City 1972—the options are boundless.” Low-resolution photography for not-for-profit purposes is permitted, as is posting on social media, although some of the Hun's imagery may not meet the terms and conditions established by various platforms.

“A lot of people, quite frankly, see some of Hun's artwork and they're like, ‘Nope, that's too extreme,’ Wasdin says. “It's not for everybody, but that's part of the beauty of it—things are not supposed to [appeal] to everyone. I will say that for me, personally, I always liked the Hun because it is more like me: I'm big, I'm hairy, and that's what the Hun was, that's what his characters looked like. It's almost inconceivable to think of a pre-Internet world where it was almost impossible to find people like you, where you couldn't simply Google ‘hairy, naked dad-bods.’”

“It's important to remember that these drawings weren't just Bill's fetish—he was making a living at this, which is a testament to the level of interest that was out there,” Wasdin says. “His work helped us proliferate a connection and a sense of community and revealed a completely different perspective of human sexuality.”

[@tonyperegrin](#)


Wave of Materials ■ MICHAEL TROPEA

exhibits black and white photographs on tiles that lie on the floor. I appreciate the experimentation with displaying photographs, as photography can become traditional and less experimental than other mediums, transfixed to frames on white walls. Xiuzhen takes city streets—the rubble, the physical materials that build a city—and conflates them with images of day-to-day life from her Beijing neighborhood.

My favorite piece in the exhibition is Zhan Wang’s *Beyond 12 Nautical Miles—Floating Rock Drifts on the Open Sea*, made in 2000. The single-channel video documents a performance of a stainless steel “rock” floating in the open sea. The viewer sees a shining silver object with soft edges rocking back and forth slightly on the waves for eight minutes and 36 seconds. The work is meant to reference how any country can claim open water as their own territory, and how the rock simply travels wherever the waves take it. In five different languages, the rock has the following inscribed into its surface: “This is a piece of art created specifically to be exhibited in the open sea. If by chance you pick it up, please put it back into the ocean. The artist thanks you from afar.”

Bringing things back down to earth are Liang Shaoji’s trained silkworms. What started small has resulted in *Chains: The Unbearable Lightness of Being, Nature Series, No. 79*, a large installation of chain-like pieces hanging from the ceiling wrapped in silk and cocoons from Shaoji’s silkworms. The artist—who has said, “I am a silkworm”—has raised them for more than 25 years. In his *Nature* series, the silkworms spin silk into certain objects, and in this work, it’s hollowed chains. Shaoji and his silkworms create work together as they play the role as the artist and the art.

It’s challenging to take in and absorb the exhibition, especially because the artwork is exhibited in two different parts of the city. Digesting one exhibition takes time to process; the works all range in concept and unconventional material. A personal tip: pick a museum to visit first, bring water, take a breather for a day or two, and tackle the next collection with a new set of eyes. It takes physical and mental time to sit with each piece, to really interpret and analyze the process. But at the end of it all, it’s worth it. **[R]**

@snicolelane

VISUAL ARTS

‘The Allure of Matter’ pushes boundaries

An exhibition in two parts—Part I: Wrightwood 659

By **S. NICOLE LANE**

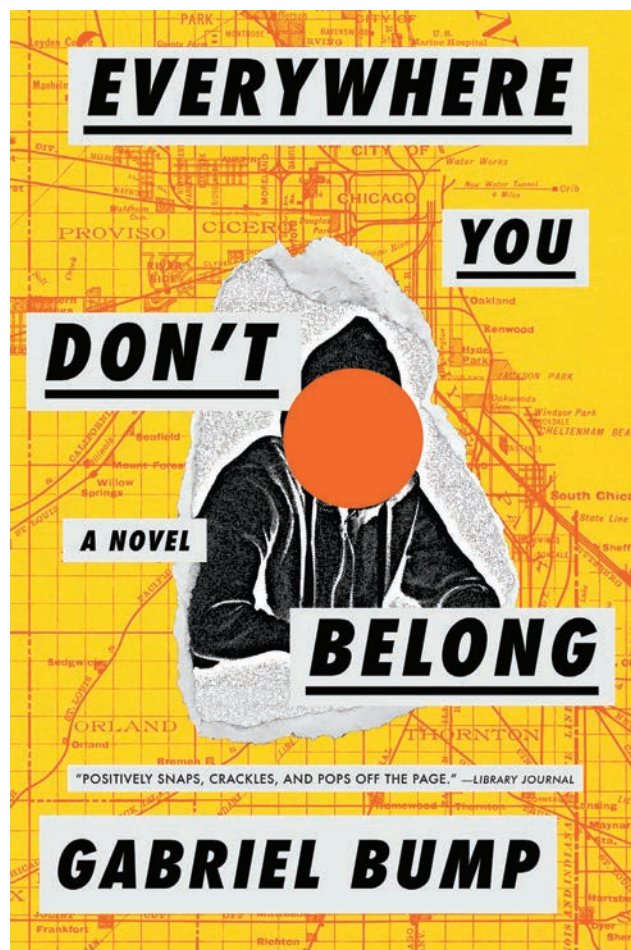
It’s not every day you see 128 roof tiles displayed on a gallery floor, ash from joss sticks painted on a canvas, and artwork co-created by trained silkworms. But at Wrightwood 659, it’s possible. The four floors of the museum are filled with “The Allure of Matter: Material Art From China,” a new exhibition

that looks at Chinese artists working in the material arts movement, which focuses largely on every-day items like hair, plastic bottles, or found objects. These artists experiment with one material for decades and transform it into something monumental. The Smart Museum of Art and Wrightwood 659 are

introducing this movement in two parts with a total of 26 artists who produced work from the 1980s until the present day.

When I walk into the space, the docent reassures me that there is no right or wrong way to view the exhibition. I take the elevator up and am confronted with Zhu Jinshi’s work, *Wave of Materials*, a large installation made from *xuan* paper, cotton thread, bamboo, and stones. *Xuan* paper is a type of material used by calligraphers and painters and has been used as a significant material in Jinshi’s work since the late 1980s. Here, Jinshi crumples, flattens, and hangs the paper from the ceiling to create a monolithic, yet delicate, installation on the top floor.

Traveling down leads viewers towards *Transformation*, an installation created by Yin Xiuzhen in 1997. Scattered across two gallery floors and down a set of stairs, the piece



LIT

Everywhere You Don't Belong puts the focus on South Shore

Gabriel Bump's debut novel looks at what it's like to never feel at home.

By JANAYA GREENE

Claude McKay Love recounts his life in two parts that many will be familiar with: before college and after college. At just five years old, Claude is abandoned by his mother and father who he's been told have moved to Missouri from Chicago's South Shore neighborhood, leaving Claude to be taken care of by his grandmother and her longtime best

friend, Paul. Before they leave, the young Black boy sees his parents' friends disappear, setting the stage for a series of moments of abandonment.

Gabriel Bump's *Everywhere You Don't Belong* (Algonquin Books) follows Claude as he grows up on the south side of Chicago, then goes away to college in Missouri. A young

Claude is somewhat satisfied living in South Shore, being filled with love by his grandmother and Paul. It's not until a riot kills several people in his neighborhood that struggles of violence and abandonment mount, and he is compelled to go to college to get away from the city.

From the start there is a strong premise of moving away. Before his partner, Teeth, dies, Paul tries to convince him they should move to Florida; a family friend left South Shore after struggling to accept his wife had left him, also for Florida; and their two children ended up in another state without either of their parents. Not long after, Claude's childhood teacher Ms. Bev goes missing, his childhood friend Bubbly moves to Oak Park, and his other friend Nugget enrolls in a middle school on the north side, both lifetimes away for any child living in a city as large as Chicago without the resources to travel.

As the book progresses, more friends move away and change becomes the ultimate constant for Claude. But the timing of events in the novel is murky. There's so much reflection on the history of Chicago, like the 1968 Democratic National Convention, that it becomes easy to think the book takes place in the late 60s and early 70s. It's not until drill rapper Chief Keef is mentioned that I realized that Claude was living in the 2010s when he was in high school. Obama is also mentioned here and there, but it's unclear which political office he's holding at the time.

In Claude's South Shore, a fictional riot happens. No more are the days of the neighborhood being safer, with mostly Irish and Jewish residents. Black people moved to the area, white people moved away, and violence increased in the 1980s, leading to the South Shore Claude knows. Mixing real and fictional events can create a strong new world, and including local school closings hints at the struggles this community faces. Yet the story is still missing world-building to paint how Claude's South Shore "magically" became a more violent environment; while it could be assumed that local businesses had gone out of business or were not being supported, stable jobs were not available, and the area was a food desert (amongst other real-world resource issues in South Shore), Claude is mostly seen catapulted between home, school, and sidewalks. It's an oversight that could easily make readers who are unfamiliar with Chicago fall victim to the lazy trope about violence

on the south side.

A more vivid picture could have made clear why Claude's South Shore is so susceptible to violence and why residents are angered by police presence in the area. His neighborhood on Euclid Avenue soon goes into uproar after a police killing of an innocent boy who was feeding his neighbors' pets while they were on vacation. The Redbelters, a neighborhood gang who seem to gain so many members that enrollment in local schools decreases, face the police while residents of the area either join the fight or try their best to leave the scene before tension mounts.

Claude is nearly caught in the uproar with a friend, Janice, and her aunt Annette. Ultimately, 26 people die in the riot, including Janice's uncle. Janice's aunt eventually leaves her, too. The foundation of the two teens' confusing (and quite unhealthy) romantic-yet-unromantic relationship becomes the center of Claude's life until the end of the book, when he is in college.

The bluntness of Claude and his childhood friends provides many literal laugh-out-loud moments, like when Bubbly says, "My parents think a police officer tied him to the tracks because Teeth wouldn't fuck him." Among the constant deaths and other losses, Bump ensures a laugh—even if it's a guilty one—to soften the blows of Claude's reality. The second part of his story is completely unrooted from precollege Claude. Whether it be a symptom of his growing up or intentional plotting, Claude's relationship to the city and others, even himself, feels confusing and it becomes difficult to understand why he makes choices that seem to contradict what he said was of value to him as he grew up in South Shore, like safety and a sustainable future.

In adulthood, Claude learns that whether he's in Chicago, or Columbia, Missouri, home is more about who you're surrounded by than where you are. Though Janice only considers leaving Chicago after a run-in with the Redbelters, the urgency of having to leave Chicago to thrive, no matter who you're leaving behind, remains. It's unfortunate and understandable that Claude, like many other real-life south siders, finds it difficult to see a future in the city that raised them. If only Claude could see that as a Black American, he'll be running forever if he continues to rely on others to tell him where he belongs. **[F]**

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THEATER



REVIEW

#SayHerName

graveyard shift gives life to a story inspired by Sandra Bland's death.

By **SHERI FLANDERS**

Quentin Tarantino's movie *Once Upon a Time . . . in Hollywood* is in part a gauzy wish fulfillment fantasy that fictionalizes and rewrites the true-life brutal murder of actor Sharon Tate. The play *graveyard shift* at the Goodman Theatre takes a similar, if not more practical, path. The play knows that it's impossible to practice necromancy and raise the spirit of the beloved from the grave but hopes that perhaps it is possible to drape flowers on her legacy. Like *Hollywood*, *graveyard shift* bestows the same gentleness and beauty that Tarantino lavished on Tate. It's an act of grace that is rarely granted to the average Black woman.

On July 10, 2015, Sandra Bland moved from Chicago to Texas to begin a new job and was pulled over during a traffic stop by Texas State Trooper Brian Encinia. The routine interaction, which should have resulted in no more than a warning or a ticket, quickly spiraled out of control and Bland, who recorded the entire exchange, was pulled from her car, forced to the ground, and arrested. Three days later,

Bland was found dead, hanging in her jail cell. Encinia was indicted for perjury for making false statements about her arrest and fired; the charges were dropped when he agreed to leave law enforcement permanently.

The senseless and tragic murder of Black people by law enforcement in America has become a national crisis that Bland was aware of before her death and was an activist against. Rubbing salt in the gaping wound of these tragedies is the predictable and unempathetic public reaction. Within hours of these violent acts, the common reaction of the general public is to search for reasons why an officer might have been justified in an outsized violent overreaction, whether that Black victim was back-talking, selling cigarettes on the street, or walking home after buying Skittles.

The fact is that there is no justification for murder, and good police officers regularly take even extremely violent people into custody without causing harm. Racism is clearly in play. Writer korde arrington tuttle understands that even while processing the grief of loss of life,

RR GRAVEYARD SHIFT

Through 3/8: Wed-Thu 7:30 PM, Fri 8 PM, Sat 2 and 8 PM, Sun 2 PM; also Tue 2/25, 7:30 PM, and Thu 3/5, 2 PM, Goodman Theatre, 170 N. Dearborn, 312-443-3800, goodmantheatre.org, \$15-\$45.

THEATER



graveyard shift LIZ LAUREN

it is doubly brutal to reduce the life of a murdered Black woman to a statistic. He builds the scaffolding upon which to elevate the rest of her humanity in *graveyard shift*. Last April the Goodman and Black Lives, Black Words staged *The Interrogation of Sandra Bland* by Mojisolo Adebayo, a theatrical recounting of the transcript of the Sandra Bland traffic stop featuring 100 Black women, as part of the I Am . . . Fest. I was one of those 100 Black women. To engage with these works as a Black woman is to unflinchingly contemplate my own mortality.

Tuttle creates a fictional Black woman named Janelle who embodies the spirit of Bland, and we follow her through her job search and move from Chicago to Texas. Actor Aneisa J. Hicks plays Janelle with full vibrancy and joy, leavened with the moments of doubt and insecurity of being a young professional striving to establish a career in a troubled economy. Director Danya Taymor does an exceptional job keeping the scenes light and frothy in the beginning, wisely anticipating the challenge of staging a story whose ending we already know. Set designer Kristen Robinson has smartly arranged the stage as a marble cemetery slab, so even as we laugh at the many mirthful moments, it ominously never fully lets us forget that lynching looms in the future like a dark shadow.

Janelle is paired with Kane, her long-distance boyfriend in Texas, played by an

incredibly sincere and heartbreaking Debo Balogun. We ride the heights and depths of their relationship, and Kane offers a flawed yet painful requiem of anguish after the inevitable. In a metaphorical mirror, the other side of the stage is the interior of a Texas state trooper's office where we follow the day-to-day life of Brian, self-proclaimed fuckup and a proxy for Officer Encinia, played by Keith D. Gallagher. Gallagher brings a full and necessary humanity to a character that would be tempting to write off as a one-note villain. His affable "good ol' boy" charm allows us to see that the face of evil is often one and the same with the faces of those that we love. A scene where Brian tells a cornered raccoon "I know you're just trying to survive" foreshadows the tenderness often granted to animals that isn't extended to cornered humans.

The play vacillates between traditional storytelling methods and lyrical, poetic stylings for occasionally on the nose, yet usually smart and impactful, effect. When Janelle and Kane playfully sing the lyrics "Say my name, when no one is around you, say baby I love you" it takes on a sickening double meaning when contrasted with Brian and Elise rocking out to rap music, singing the "N-word" with impunity, knowing that the PC police cannot mandate empathy in the graveyard of shadowy hearts. #SayHerName.

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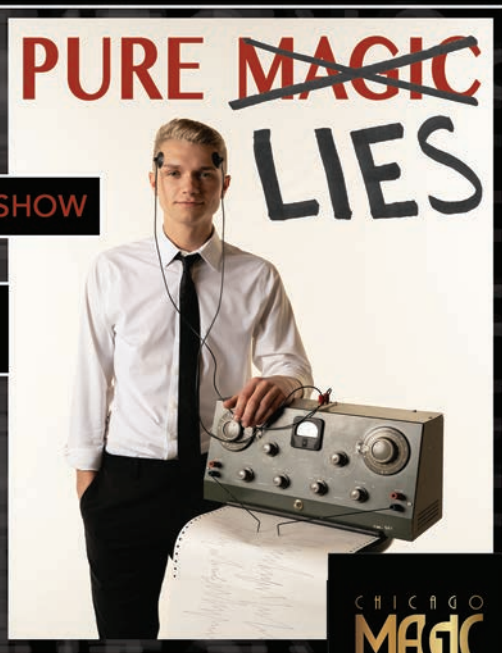
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OPENING

RR Chekhov's diving board
A rancid swimming pool symbolizes
personal and political horror in *Kiev*.

Anton Chekhov's famous dictum that if a gun is introduced in the first act, it must go off by the second is reimagined in Franco-Uruguayan playwright Sergio Blanco's *Kiev* in the seemingly innocuous form of a diving board. No one literally goes off the board into the stinking murky waters of the pool on the Badenweiler estate, soon to be demolished by steamrollers. But what it hides has poisoned the whole family.

The parallels to Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* are deliberate. But Blanco, whose work receives its dynamic and absorbing U.S. premiere with Aguijón under Abel González Melo's direction (in Spanish with English supertitles), has more than the economic disruptions of one family in mind. And that pool, in which matriarch Eiren Badenweiler's child drowned years earlier, isn't just about that earlier tragedy. The Badenweilers are representative of any family living under—and complicit in—the horrors of an authoritarian state, like the one that dominated Uruguay in the 1970s and early 1980s.

Eiren (Rosario Vargas), like Madame Ranyevskaya in Chekhov's play, is torn between past and present, and depends upon generous helpings of denial to help her deal with her pain. But that denial has come at great cost to her disabled son Alden (Oswaldo Calderón) and daughter Dafne (the luminous Marcela Muñoz), who soothes her own pain in opioids when not trying to smooth the conflicts among everyone else. Uncle

Esvald (Sándor Menéndez) has kept the estate running over the years—but for what purpose?

The arrival of Tavio (Israel Balza), the former tutor for the drowned boy, threatens to uncover everything Esvald has tried to hide. But his own guilt (and the disaster unfolding in the city of the play's title) means that a true healing reckoning can't be found. "The civil atom is as dangerous as the military atom," Esvald observes at one point. In *Kiev*, that civil danger lives on; remorseless, relentless, and inescapable. —**KERRY REID** *KIEV* Through 3/15: Fri-Sat 8 PM, Sun 3 PM, Aguijón Theater, 2707 N. Laramie, 773-637-5899, aguijontheater.org, \$30, \$15 students and seniors, \$10 for Belmont-Cragin residents.

RR The Kennedy curse
Rosemary Kennedy's lobotomy is a
metaphor for obsession with conformity at *Trap Door*.

Kate Hendrickson directs the Chicago premiere of Krista Knight's *Lipstick Lobotomy*, an arch but moving 2019 play about mental illness, conformity, and the search for understanding in World War II-era America. When Ginny (Ann Sonnevile) checks into an upper-crust sanitarium hoping to be cured of obsessive thinking and persistent depression, she immediately latches on to Rosemary (Abby Blankenship), an unruly fellow patient and the eldest daughter of kingmaker Joseph Kennedy. What starts out as an over-the-top comic skewering of social mores gains a tragic gravity as the "cure" for the women's illnesses comes into sharper focus.

Ginny's and Rosemary's families want them to fit in

THEATER

and not embarrass them, so they resort to the latest, largely-unproven procedures to correct their behavior. When Rosemary's lobotomy goes so badly that it leaves her permanently incapacitated, Ginny is forced to rethink her ardent desire to follow her friend into the operating room.

The conflict between the desire to be like everyone else and to hold on to what makes one unique is an evergreen problem, given a twist in Knight's cheerfully tragic text. Each era has its quack cures that look barbaric in hindsight. I have no doubt that many 2020 treatments for mental and emotional troubles will be considered savage and inept within a couple decades. So cutting out chunks of brain matter to make women behave is, sadly, not as outlandishly archaic as it should be. The horrific final image of a roomful of patients dancing and singing in grotesque smile masks is now lodged in my head like a bad dream. —**DMITRY SAMAROV** *LIPSTICK LOBOTOMY* Through 3/21: Thu-Sat 8 PM, Trap Door Theatre, 1655 W. Cortland, 773-384-0494, trapdoortheatre.com, \$20 Thu-Fri, \$25 Sat; also 2-for-1 Thu.

RR Fruitful revival
A *Raisin in the Sun* is still poignant and timely.

Before Ta-Nehisi Coates laid out "The Case for Rep-

arations" in the *Atlantic* in 2014, Lorraine Hansberry's 1959 classic *A Raisin in the Sun* clearly showed the effects of racism on Black Americans seeking better living conditions—a problem we've yet to fully address. The Younger family—so cramped for space in their roach-infested apartment that son Travis has to sleep on the living room couch—hopes to buy a better piece of the American pie, thanks to a life insurance payout from their late husband and father. But what that pie looks like varies wildly, and Invictus Theatre Company's current revival of *Raisin*, directed by Aaron Reese Boseman, honors those conflicting dreams with conviction and heart.

Matriarch Lena (Cheryl Frazier) wants to buy a house, even if that means moving to an unfriendly white neighborhood. Her son, Walter Lee (Michael Lewis), wants to stop being a driver for white people and take the wheel of his own destiny by buying into a liquor store. His little sister, Beneatha (Ashley Joy), wants to be a doctor and is torn between a bourgeois beau, George (Keith Surney), who is interested in her as arm candy, and a Nigerian student, Joseph (Jo Schaffer), who offers a broader vista for her life. Meantime, Ruth (Nyajai Ellison), Walter's wife, is facing an unexpected pregnancy and anguish about her husband's growing anger about his deferred dreams.

Hansberry crammed a lot of life into that small flat (the story is based in part on her own family's legal



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Left to Right: Shi Hui, *Float*, 2000/2007/2013/2020, Installation view, Wrightwood 659, 2020. gu wenda, *united nations: american code*, 2019, Photo © Museum Associates/LACMA.



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THE ALLURE OF MATTER Material Art from China

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continued from 21

dingy set. On opening night, there were some moments where the actors didn't feel completely connected to each other, but it's clear that they know these characters' hurts and hopes to the bone, and I suspect the ensemble will grow even stronger over the run. —**KERRY REID** ***A RAISIN IN THE SUN*** Through 3/15: Mon and Thu-Sat 7:30 PM, Sun 3 PM, the Buena at Pride Arts Center, 4147 N. Broadway, invictustheatrec.com, \$25, \$15 students.

Not so hair-raising

Shear Madness shows its age at the Mercury.

Adapted by Marilyn Abrams and Bruce Jordan from the original play *Scherenschnitt*, (*scissors cut*), by German playwright Paul Pörtner, *Shear Madness* is not so much a fully realized work of comic theater as a kind of silly party game writ large. The premise is reminiscent of interactive murder mysteries: setting—a beauty salon; characters—a brace of stereotypes (gay hair dresser, ditsy beautician, bulldog homicide detective); McGuffin—the murder of an upstairs neighbor. But the real mystery is why we should care about the death of a character we never meet. This is theater for people who don't know much about theater, and comedy for audiences drunk

enough to laugh at anything. (The snack bar serves alcohol that you can take into the auditorium.)

The current Mercury Theater Chicago revival, directed by Warner Crocker, is by design tipsy and “fun.” Actors break character all the time, ad lib ad nauseum, or fake cracking up (like the late Harvey Korman used to do way too often on *The Carol Burnett Show*). And then about halfway through it all the fourth wall is ripped down, and the audience is invited to “participate” in the “solving” of the “murder.” I suppose this kind of thing must have seemed daring in 1963, when Pörtner's original play opened. But today the premise is too tired to even be called retro. There is nothing novel about Crocker's point-and-click direction.

Still, the casting is great. In the leads, Ed Kross and Brittany D. Parker get lots of chances to show off their comic chops. But the flashes of comic brilliance they and the rest of the cast display from time to time make one wish they were in a real play. —**JACK HELBIG** ***SHEAR MADNESS*** Through 3/29: Wed-Fri 8 PM, Sat 3 and 8 PM, Sun 3 PM, Mercury Theater Chicago, 3745 N. Southport, 773-325-1700, mercurytheaterchicago.com, \$40-\$80.

RR Sticking points

Lydia Diamond's breakthrough hit comes

home at Writers Theatre.

In 2017, First Floor Theater premiered Leah Nanako Winkler's *Two Mile Hollow*—a send-up of what Winkler terms “white people by the water” plays, in which a wealthy clan gathers at a beach house to fight, reveal secrets, and reminisce. The catch for Winkler's work was that the characters were all played by people of color, offering ironic counterpoint to white privilege's ridiculous insularity.

Lydia Diamond's *Stick Fly*, which had its world premiere in 2006 with Chicago's Congo Square before eventually opening on Broadway in 2011, has some things in common with the world that Winkler parodied. But Diamond's family is actually Black and wealthy, with long roots in Martha's Vineyard and Romare Bearden paintings on the wall. Diamond, who grew up the daughter of an academic, has written about the collisions of class and race within and without Black families and communities in several works. In *Stick Fly*, now revived at Writers Theatre under Ron OJ Parson's direction, the outlines of the traditional “well-made play” serve her well in anatomizing the subtle but hurtful hypocrisies and internalized self-loathing that keep the characters from fully connecting.

The title comes from the work that Taylor (Jennifer

Latimore), an entomologist from an economically lower class, does with examining insects; they have to be secured to a stick in order to document their wing movements. But things rapidly become unglued over the course of a few days, as Taylor's fiancé Kent (Eric Gerard) faces the disdain his neurosurgeon father Joe (David Alan Anderson) has for his nascent career as a novelist, compared to the chip-off-the-old-block attitude Dad has toward his eldest, plastic surgeon Flip (DiMonte Henning), who brings Kimber (Kayla Raelle Holder), an old-school WASP, to meet the family. Meantime Cheryl (Ayanna Bria Bakari), daughter of the family maid, learns the truth about her parentage.

Diamond's writing works against the grain of the potentially soapy plotlines, and each character gets at least one moment to burst through social constraints to reveal what they're really thinking. (Latimore's Taylor more than the rest.) Old history (familial and otherwise) collides with present-day realities, and by the end of Diamond's wise and funny play (well acted across the board here), everyone's wings have been clipped by reality. —**KERRY REID** ***STICK FLY*** Through 3/15: Tue-Fri 7:30 PM, Sat 3 and 7:30 PM, Sun 2 and 6 PM; also Wed 2/26 and 3/11, 3 PM; Sun 3/1 and 3/15, 2 PM only, Writers Theatre, 325 Tudor Ct., Glencoe, 847-242-6000, writerstheatre.org, \$35-\$80. **R**

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8,000 © NATHALIE GALDE

FEATURE

Endometriosis, vibrators, and sex education, oh my!

8,000 uses comedy to discuss a painful reality.

By S. NICOLE LANE

Painful sex affects millions of women every year. The exact numbers are unaccounted for because doctors don't always believe women's pain and other women feel shame or guilt about their experience and don't come forward. I struggled with vaginismus, an involuntary muscle spasm, for eight years and found solace at Spectrum Boutique (a Detroit-based sex shop), where I purchased my first dilators. Soon I was on my way to a happy, healthy sex life. It came with successes, a lot of failures, and immense stress. It wasn't easy by any means—it was alienating, terrifying, and exhausting. So that's why when I heard about the comedy short *8,000*, I was thrilled that women, specifically queer women, are talking about a topic so terribly ignored.

Ally Nikolaus, 27, completed *8,000*—named for the number of nerve endings in the clitoris—at a rapid pace in September of 2019.

After the idea was born, the first draft was completed the next day. The River West comedian and writer based the film on her own experience with endometriosis, a medical issue that affects 11 percent of women, where the tissue that lines the uterus grows outside of the organ. The main character in the film, Ryann, is trying to find relief during sex and goes to a sex shop, *Early to Bed*, with her best friend, Noor.

Before *8,000*, Nikolaus wrote her last script two years ago. She took a year off to focus on her health and a coming-out memoir, which is still in-process. Previously, she worked on sketch shows and is currently in the Conservatory at Second City and also runs a monthly LGBTQ+ writers workshop. After starting a fundraiser for *8,000* on Kickstarter in October, the comedy was fully funded within 16 days. Nikolaus approached Nikki Kanjiani (who

plays Noor and is also the producer on the film) with her script, which Kanjiani describes as a “comedic take on a very serious issue.”

Amanda J. Adeleye, an assistant professor of obstetrics and gynecology at the University of Chicago, says, “The most common symptom of endometriosis is pain.” She explains that “endometriosis can be associated with more depressive symptoms or more stress. There are other impacts of endometriosis on one's life—if symptoms are bad enough they can interfere with work and relationships. On the other hand, we know that there are women with endometriosis who have no pain at all, sometimes it is diagnosed incidentally when a person has a pelvic surgery for another reason.”

Nikolaus started to experience pain after her first period. In 2017 she realized that the pain was permanent. After being misdiagnosed with irritable bowel syndrome with constipation (IBS-C) and having her gynecologist advise that she just “take some Tylenol,” Nikolaus was determined to get to the root of her pain.

“I was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis, stomach ulcers, esophagitis, and a touch of diverticulitis within a three-month span,” she says. “The endometriosis diagnosis came after a fibroid was found stemming from my uterus like a goddamn piece of broccoli.” After the fibroid was removed in 2018, the doctors found endometriosis.

“Sometimes, endometriosis can lead to the development of scar tissue in the pelvis,” Adeleye says. “When pelvic structures like the cervix, uterus, and ovaries are moved around during intercourse, it can cause stretching and possibly pain. It is also possible that some people have endometriosis implants in places that when they are touched, they hurt.”

With nearly three out of four women-identifying people struggling with painful intercourse at some point in their life, it isn't a rare experience. But we aren't talking about it enough. Without an open dialogue about this health concern, people are struggling in silence. Statistics may be lower than reality because patients are apprehensive about speaking about their pain.

Adeleye says “all people are deserving of having a quality sex life if they desire to,” which is why it's imperative that we normalize our discussions around sex. A film like *8,000*

is just what people like me, and thousands of others, deserve when feeling embarrassed or misunderstood about their experience. To see someone on a screen who feels what you're feeling is a sort of sick relief—ah, to know I'm not alone in this labyrinth of pain.

In *8,000* the stars tackle another “taboo” topic—masturbation. “The act of sexual intercourse is not as taboo as self-pleasuring, especially for women,” Kanjiani says. “Noor, Ryann's best friend, fights this stigma by being the WOC that loves masturbation with toys in all its glory and doesn't care who knows it. Bringing Ryann into new territory, Noor gently leads her friend into a world where a painless orgasm is not just the goal, but actually achievable.”

Not only does the comedy star two queer women, its crew is largely LGBTQ and POC—86 percent to be exact. “I'm a Pakistani immigrant,” Kanjiani says. “Growing up, I didn't see myself and my experience reflected in the media. This being my first film as a producer, I wanted to give opportunities to my talented siblings. If we're not going to lift each other up, the white man certainly won't.”

8,000 is not just a love letter to people struggling with pain, but also a love song for those still experimenting with their body and discovering the magic of lube, vibrators, and everything in between. Through comedy, Ryann and Noor work towards eradicating Ryann's pain one dildo at a time. And this isn't as rare or absurd as you may think. When I was 18, I visited the sex shop in my hometown to purchase my own vibrator in hopes of curing whatever the hell was happening with my body. “It's too big!” I would shout across the store as a friend would flop around a purple and veiny phallus-shaped piece of silicone. I settled on a blue Jack Rabbit, small enough not to terrify me but large enough to do the deed. It wouldn't be until years later that I would move to Chicago, find a great doctor, and cure my vaginismus. The sex shop for Ryann is the doctor's office, as it was mine. When no one's listening and no one knows a cure, your friends and rows of colorful peters, pricks, and johnsons are there for you. **A**

8,000 is currently in post-production so follow Ally (@allyxxnik) and Nikki (@nikkikanjiani) for personal updates and @8000themovie on Instagram for future screening times and upcoming viewings at festivals.

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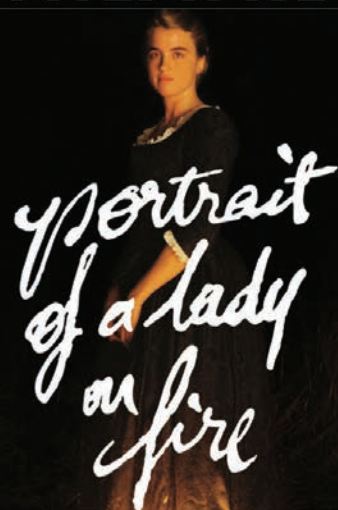
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FILM



Bleacher Bums:
Rabid Fans of
Wrigley Field

PREVIEW

‘Chicago Memories’ showcases the spirit of the city

The three short documentaries dig deep into corners of Chicago history.

By KATHLEEN SACHS

In his poem “Chicago,” Carl Sandburg wrote of our great city’s mirthful denizens, “Come and show me another city with lifted head singing so proud to be alive and coarse and strong and cunning.” This particular line of Sandburg’s rapturous ode came to mind as I watched the three short documentaries that comprise “Chicago Memories,” a program screening Saturday at Chicago Filmmakers.

“CHICAGO MEMORIES”
Sat 2/22, 8 PM, Chicago Filmmakers, 5720 N. Ridge, chicagofilmmakers.org, \$8 suggested donation.

Coproduced by Harvey Moshman and long-time *Wild Chicago* host Will Clinger, these short television documentaries, part of a series called *Wild Chronicles*, which dates from the 1990s to

the early 2000s, are not only enjoyable; they illuminate the very idiosyncrasies that make the City of Big Shoulders worthy of being panegyricized both on the page and on the screen.

Who else was “alive and coarse” if not Chicago comedian Del Close? The aptly titled *The Legend of Del Close* (2000) is a concise portrait of the renowned eccentric, but, ironically, because Close’s peculiarities are widely known, this is perhaps the least enlightening of the three. *Legend* covers Close’s mysterious origins (it’s revealed that he faked his own death as a teenager); his contentious, albeit illustrious career; and, finally, his death and the party he threw at the hospital the day before. Much like the party, the segment is a star-studded affair: Bill Murray makes an appearance, as do Harold Ramis, Amy Poehler, and Dave Pasquesi, but Close—who is shown in old interviews and film

and television clips—strikes the most formidable presence.

The recipient of a Midwest Emmy, *Vanishing Act* (1996) goes back to the days of vaudeville, when Chicago was second only to New York in terms of prestige. Clinger interviews several vaudeville stars who lived and worked in Chicago during that era, and their stories are fascinating. The subjects (among them singers, dancers, magicians, acrobats, talking-dog trainers, etc.) reflect the range of talents one typically found in vaudeville shows. Clinger also makes a point of featuring Black performers—Maceo Anderson of the Four Step Brothers is one such interviewee—and examines the problematic use of blackface within the practice.

My favorite of the three, *Bleacher Bums: Rabid Fans Of Wrigley Field* (1998), profiles storied Cubs fans. Clinger seeks out the original bums, though, as with the beginning of any great thing, there’s some dispute over who originated the fabled pastime. The episode is centered around the Cubs’ 1969 season, when the team came closest to winning the pennant than they had since 1908; the Bleacher Bums rose to prominence that year, as their antics made the team’s strong season seem that much more convivial. Above all, they helped to engender feelings of pride in our city, alive, coarse, strong, and cunning as it’s shown to be in all three of these “Chicago Memories.” **A**



The Photograph

NOW PLAYING

RR Goldie

Dutch director Sam de Jong delivers a fresh take on the classic ambitious New Yorker movie featuring model Slick Woods of Fenty fame in her debut role as a plucky, grinning dreamer from the Bronx named Goldie. Hyperchromatic and gorgeously fragmented, the film clocks in at a perfect 90 minutes, divided into several chapters announced by the birdlike voices of young girls. Though the film is unflinching in its portrayal of homelessness and economic precarity, it is the warm depictions of family and sisterhood, as well as the colorful, vibrant futures Goldie imagines for herself that set this aspirational story apart. Vivid and vivacious without denying the occasional lacunae of life's inevitable dark-nesses, this movie is a burst of spring on winter screens.

—NINA LI COOMES 88 min. 2/21-2/27: Fri 4:30 and 6:45 PM, Sat and Mon 7:45 PM, Sun 4:45 PM, Tue 6 PM, Wed 8:15 PM, Thu 6:15 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center

Isi and Ossi

Writer-director Oliver Kienle's *Isi & Ossi* presents us with the typical tropes of an upstairs-downstairs romantic comedy set in a German millennial context. The billionaire's daughter Isi (Lisa Vicari) is a terrible student who dreams of getting her parents to pay for culinary school in New York, but is thwarted by her family's more lofty expectations of a university degree. The working-class Ossi (Dennis Mojen) is a hardheaded and crude aspiring boxer, raised by a single mom, who needs money to promote the fight that is going to be his big break. After a few uncoordinated attempts at bumbling fake romance, the two come clean with each other and realize their efforts could be better accomplished with some good old-fashioned teamwork. Hilarity largely doesn't ensue, the jokes are stressed well beyond their expiration dates—the primary laughs come from Ossi's grandfather

(Ernest Stötzner), who is recently out of prison and holds his own dreams of becoming a rapper, and a particularly comedic scene from Ossi's best bud Tschünni (Walid Al-Atiyat), who provides a layman's critique of an upscale art opening. Throw in a couple of heartfelt moments of reckoning between Isi, Osi, and their respective parents, and that just about fills out a film that would have benefited from not going the full 12 rounds. —ADAM MULLINS-KHATIB 113 min. Netflix

RR The Photograph

Stella Meghie's *(Jean of the Joneses, The Weekend)* *The Photograph* is a refreshing take on how ill-directed familial angst so often stops healthy romantic love right in its tracks. Mae (Issa Rae) is an assistant curator at the Queen's Museum who is grieving the death of her mother Christina Eames, a famous photographer who always kept her daughter at a distance. Her sudden death left Mae regretting that she'd never have the opportunity to truly know the ins and outs of who her mom was. A journalist, Michael (LaKeith Stanfield), reaches out to her inquiring about photographs taken by her late mom. Michael's reporting leads him to Isaac Jefferson (Rob Morgan). Eventually it's revealed that Michael is looking into the life of Christina, and Isaac was a very close friend of hers. A photograph on Isaac's mantel points Michael in the right direction, to Mae. While their acting was perfectly satisfactory, the chemistry between Rae and Stanfield doesn't burst at the seams. The passion in the film lies in Mae's learning of her mother's past after she died. This film is about how not facing familial trauma head on can perpetuate unhealthy love in all parts of life, making it that much more difficult to love anyone intimately. *The Photograph* reminds us that familial love is the root of how we love others. Whether it be a lifelong journey or a year's triumph, digging deep is worth the trek. —JANAYA GREENE PG-13, 106 min. In wide release

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Alicia Greco moved to Chicago in November 2017 and launched *Daisychain* two months later. © JEFF MARINI FOR CHICAGO READER

***Daisychain* gives women and nonbinary DJs the platform they deserve**

Alicia Greco's weekly podcast has already posted 110 mixes, fostering a community that won't stay marginalized much longer.

By **LEOR GALIL**

Even before Alicia Greco moved from Buffalo, New York, to Chicago in November 2017, she knew she wanted to start a party series that centered women and nonbinary DJs. She was already DJing herself, under the name Leesh, but she figured she wouldn't be able to launch an event and simultaneously find her bearings in a new city. After she arrived, she decided to pursue the same goal—spotlighting contemporary dance artists from marginalized gender communities—with a podcast instead. That way she could involve people from anywhere in the world, instead of needing to rely exclusively on a Chicago network that she was still developing. And in theory, building a name for her podcast would make the transition into throwing actual parties seamless.

In January 2018, Greco launched the weekly podcast *Daisychain*. She started organizing *Daisychain* parties that summer, but even now, the podcast is the regular event—the

MUSIC

parties remain sporadic. “It’s funny, the podcast actually became the thing,” Greco says. “The parties are just something that happen in support of the podcast, when it was supposed to be flip-flopped.”

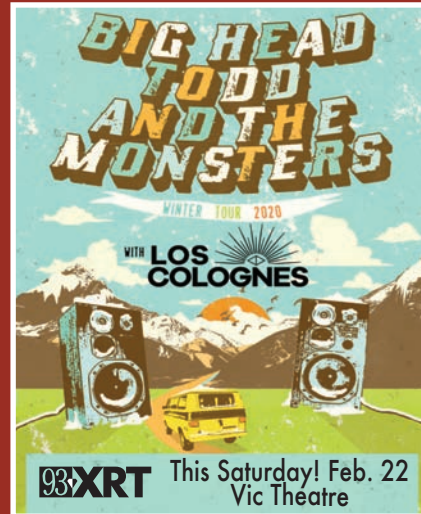
Every Tuesday, Greco posts a new episode to *Daisychain*’s Soundcloud page. It’s not a talking podcast—each episode consists entirely of a single mix by a guest contributor, typically about an hour long (though non-binary producer Acid Daddy, from Chicago’s Naughty Bad Fun Collective, made a mix for May 2019 that runs nearly an hour and 45 minutes). Every episode’s individual Soundcloud page identifies the contributor (name, alias, pronouns, home base) and includes a list of influences, a favorite quote, and advice for queer, POC, nonbinary, and woman-identifying DJs.

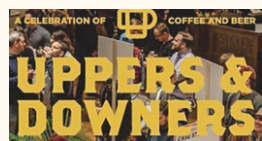
Many episodes also include a link to a track list, which Greco posts on the *Daisychain* Facebook page. Greco interviews every *Daisychain* guest, and when the corresponding episode goes live, she publishes a thoughtful profile derived from that interview (though it appears on her personal Facebook page, not the *Daisychain* page). She takes great care to describe each guest’s personal history and connection to dance music. “It’s like, ‘Yes, they’re DJs, but they’re people—they have a story, they have something that’s pushing them and making them want to do this,’” Greco says. “I think that that is just as important as the tracks that are coming through.”

Greco has posted 110 mixes from 112 different producers—episode 73 features three members of New York collective Working Women. Greco knows she’ll never run out of potential subjects, and she says she’s planned out every week of *Daisychain* through July. Only about a fifth of the guests live in Chicago; others have been from Mexico, Canada, Ukraine, Australia, Peru, Norway, Portugal, Uganda, and Malaysia. And *Daisychain* matches this diversity in points of origin with diversity in sound: in December 2018, Brooklyn DJ Vicki Siolos offered a mix made entirely out of sylvan ambient tracks from Canadian label Silent Season, which might as well have come from a different universe than the hyperactive, face-melting blitz submitted in December 2019 by Pittsburgh artist W00dy (who headlines a dance-friendly installment of the Hideout’s experimental Resonance series on Saturday, February 29).

Daisychain’s most popular episode, with renowned Brooklyn-based producer Octo

jam presents





2-23 UPPERS & DOWNERS



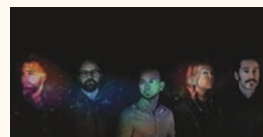
3-2 JOSH THOMAS



3-5 BLACK LIPS
poppy jean crawford
& les strychnine



3-12 DURAND JONES
& THE INDICATIONS



3-14 MURDER BY
DEATH
3-15



3-18 LEO DAN

2-22 TODD BARRY

3-1 DESTROYER

3-19 THE DISTRICTS

2-26 YETI FILM TOUR

3-3 FLY FISHING
FILM TOUR 2020

3-20 POLIÇA

2-27 TH/CINEMA PRESENTS
DIRTY DANCING

3-7 ANDY SHAUF

3-24 DAL NIENTE +
KEN VANDERMARK

2-28 RADICAL FACE

3-11 BEST COAST

3-25 BLACK PUMAS

3-1 THE MUSIC OF
PHISH FOR KIDS

3-13 ANDREW
SANTINO

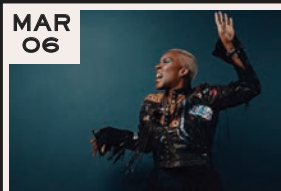
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FEB 26 ADAM NESS W/
SHANTINA LYNET,
FRANCHIKA & APOLLO

FEB 26 WE LOVE
WEDNESDAYS

FEB 28 LET'S PARTY FOR
THE CULTURE 2020

FEB 29 HASHTAG
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continued from 29

Octa, has nearly 20,000 Soundcloud plays, but many mixes have fewer than 1,000. Those numbers may not seem impressive, but the podcast has attracted an active and engaged listener base—Greco has already noticed instances where it's helped create the positivity she'd hoped it would. "There's been a few people that have told me how it's affected them as a DJ, the way they throw parties," she says. "Even just people, listeners, have been super touched by it—it's helped them in some way."

Earlier this month, dance historian and critic Michaelangelo Matos profiled *Daisychain* for globally minded UK dance-music outlet *Mixmag*, calling it "one of the most consistent in the game." Each new episode not only unfolds another story of a marginalized voice in dance music but also adds a new artist to the growing community involved in *Daisychain*.

"I can't even quite wrap my head around how many awesome people are in so many different places, doing so many different things, and *Daisychain's* become this little home that people come to," Greco says. "It makes me cry—it's so touching and heartwarming. I feel really grateful to be that in-between to get people to know that they can do this too."

Greco got hooked on IDM, drum 'n' bass, and dubstep just before she started college in Buffalo in the late 2000s, then immersed herself in underground house and techno. She studied journalism at Canisius College, graduating in 2013, and in 2015 she decided to express her love of writing and dance music with a blog called Sequencer. "That was when I really started to get to know DJs on a very personal level and forming this narrative of what it is they're doing, why they're doing it, and that symbiotic connection between music, DJ, and dancer," she says.

In her first year running Sequencer, Greco interviewed Chicago DJ Sam Kern, better known as Sassmouth. "Hearing her story, I was like, 'This woman is amazing—she's a mom, she's a flight attendant, she's traveling the world, DJing,'" Greco says. The Sequencer interview doubled as a preview of a Sassmouth DJ set in Rochester that was part of a series called Signal > Noise; Greco drove an hour and a half to be there.

"Alicia has incredible energy that you feel when you meet her in person—and through everything she does, it's a true genuine enthusiasm for music," Kern says. "She came up

and introduced herself before I DJed. In some ways it reminded me of seeing a younger version of myself."

Kern grew up in the Pacific Northwest, and her day job relocated her to Chicago in 2000. By going to clubs such as Crobar and Smart Bar (where she's now a resident), she connected with scene regulars who inspired her to give DJing a try. She didn't come to them for pointers, though—instead she taught herself, largely in private.

"I was afraid to ask stupid questions, or not look like I knew what I was doing, because I was really one of the few women that I knew that was doing it," she says. "The women that I did know that were doing it—DJs like Heather and Lady D—were already touring around, and to me, they were superstars. They weren't really people I could approach, so I figured it out on my own over the years."

The fact that Kern felt she had no choice but to learn the mechanics of the craft in isolation was a big part of what inspired her to team up with fellow DJ Elly "Kiddo" Schook in 2017 to launch the workshop and mentorship program Walking & Falling. "We decided to start working on a program, and it was all the idea of volunteering our time—and whoever else wanted to could volunteer their time as well—to teach and accelerate the process for women and nonbinary folks that want to learn," Kern says. "Hopefully, if we start teaching folks, then they can go on and teach folks."

Kern and Schook had already spent a lot of time as mentors when they held the first formal Walking & Falling in March 2017. It included DJing workshops, parties at Smart Bar and Gramophone Records, drop-ins at WNUR and WLWU, and a potluck. Kern invited Greco, who was still living in Buffalo, to stay with her for the week.

"I was like, 'Oh my God, there's so many women here, there's so many queer people here, everybody's working so hard and such an individual and doing their thing,'" Greco says. "That just opened my eyes big-time to all that could be." Eight months later, she sold off most of her belongings, packed the few that were left into her Toyota Corolla, and drove to Chicago.

Greco had posted guest mixes on Sequencer, but that series wasn't as ambitious as what she dreamed up for *Daisychain*. "I remember talking to Elly—Kiddo—about my idea," Greco says. "She was

MUSIC

like, 'It's a good idea—how frequently?' I'm like, 'One a week.' She's like, 'That's so aggressive.' She still says that to me, all the time. And it is, it's super aggressive, but the idea of doing one a month isn't enough—there's too many people out there to do it just once a month."

Greco drew on her growing network of friends to help fine-tune the podcast. Acid Daddy, aka Jarvi Schneider (who would later appear on episode 69), recorded the chain-clattering sounds that open each *Daisychain* mix. In-demand Chicago DJ Sold, aka Glenna Fitch (episode 12), transformed Greco's sketch for a logo into a digitized design—a daisy with a smiley face at its center, surrounded by a circle of link chain. Greco enlisted San Francisco producer Experimental Housewife, aka Evelyn Malinowski, for the inaugural mix. "I've studied Evelyn's DJ sets," Greco says. "I really just went for people who were friends of mine that I've connected with over time, and then it really snowballed from there—I kept meeting more and more people, making friends with new people, and finding out that they're really awesome DJs."

At first, Greco would "cold call" DJs through Facebook or Instagram messages, explaining the podcast and asking them to contribute. "It's been funny, 'cause usually their response is, 'Oh my God, I love it,'" she says. "I still am in the state of mind that people don't know it. It's wild that a lot of people are already aware of it, and they're super excited about it." At the end of 2018, Greco put out an open call for *Daisychain* submissions, which has helped increase her list of contacts.

Whenever a DJ signs on, Greco has to find a good time to run the mix—she uses spreadsheets to keep tabs on everyone's progress through the process. She likes to give contributors plenty of time to finesse their mixes, and she usually sends DJs a reminder message a couple weeks before an episode is set to go live. "I get it, being a DJ—it's dates, mixes, and gigs," she says. "It gets kind of wild at times, so I'm happy to be the organizer. I like it. It's thrilling."

Greco says she hasn't had much trouble maintaining *Daisychain*'s weekly schedule. And she's been happy with the mixes she's received—she's never asked a DJ to fix anything but sound quality. "I've had DJs ask me if they think I should put it out, or if it's good enough," she says. "I'm like, 'This is you. I like it, but my opinion also doesn't totally matter."

This is your space to be yourself and do your thing."

"The care that Alicia expresses towards each and every person who does a mix on *Daisychain* is completely unparalleled in any other mix series that I've seen," says Seattle DJ Livwutang, who goes by Liv and made the podcast's 68th mix. Greco reached out to her to contribute at the suggestion of Liv's friend Chachi, who did the 14th *Daisychain* episode. "I was stoked to see a mix series that was explicitly focused on women and nonbinary people," Liv says. "I was new to playing dance music—I still am—but I can't think of any other mix series that is operating with that explicit focus besides *Daisychain*."

Liv says she spent about a month working on her mix, including rehearsing the final version live about a half dozen times in her studio—which is inside a vault in the former Old Rainier Brewery. "My mixes are the main creative output that people will have to remember me by, and I want them to be perfect," Liv says. "Alicia's put out so many mixes—I have no idea how she's had the time to do all of it—but she's very conscious that not everything she records or plays out is perfect. She taught me how to be really gentle with myself, and that people can sense when you're being kind to yourself, whether that's in a recording or if that's in a live DJ set."

After Liv's *Daisychain* episode went live in April 2019, it helped her land a gig in Vancouver. She and Greco have also become close—they'll talk before one of them has a performance, ask each other for advice about a mix, or commiserate about their personal lives. They've met in person only briefly, in September at Sustain-Release, a four-day underground dance festival in the Catskills. But their connection means a lot to both of them. "I haven't met a lot of people who've done *Daisychains*," Liv says. "But I feel like we're all intricately connected now, because we've all had the experience of feeling cared for and invested in by Alicia."

Greco isn't interested in using *Daisychain* to further her own aspirations as a DJ, and so far she hasn't contributed a mix to the series. "It's not about me," she says. "A lot of people think it's a team of people, which is really funny—like, 'No, it's just me.' It's helped me foster my own little sense of community here and abroad."

That community—at least the Chicago

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Greco posts a *Daisychain* mix every week: “The idea of doing one a month isn’t enough,” she says. “There’s too many people out there to do it just once a month.” JEFF MARINI FOR CHICAGO READER

continued from 31

part of it—has helped support Greco’s *Daisychain* parties, which also celebrate woman-identifying and nonbinary DJs. The first was a private Fourth of July event in 2018, but since then they’ve been increasingly public. In fall 2018 she hosted a party in Buffalo, and last year she had three: a one-year anniversary at an underground space in March, a patio session in July, and a free afternoon of music in Humboldt Park (in collaboration with the Humboldt Arboreal Society’s dance series) in August.

Greco hasn’t used the podcast to promote

herself or her gigs, but working on it has made her a better DJ. Talking to *Daisychain* contributors and listening to their mixes has spurred her to challenge herself creatively. “I’ve been playing more aggressive, which is something I’ve always liked and something I’ve always cared about. Now that I’m starting to find more confidence and my voice, I’m not as nervous to play those tracks out and take risks,” she says. “That ties back into the inspiration of all these DJs that are just doing the thing and doing it well. That pushes me too.”

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PICK OF THE WEEK

Amalea Tshilds's new *Love on the Ground* turns French poetry into harmony-rich Americana

Amalea Tshilds PHOTO BY WHITNEY BRADSHAW

AMALEA TSHILDS, TIM KAISER

Fri 2/21, 8:30 PM, Constellation, 3111 N. Western, \$15. 18+

AMALEA TSHILDS IS A FAMILIAR FACE to anyone who's ever enjoyed a meal at Logan Square's beloved Lula Cafe, but in the past few years she's also raised her profile as a singer-songwriter. It's a decided shift from running the neighborhood restaurant she's co-owned for more than two decades, but her musical pursuits are hardly new. Tshilds has trafficked in warm, homespun Americana for years, singing and strumming around town with Girls of the Golden West and Pollyanna Vox (and before that with Jim Becker's Paulina Hollers). More recently she's taken the spotlight with her own music—dulcet and comforting, it's rooted in folk and country traditions and grounded by the caress of her voice. Tshilds's second full-length, *Love on the Ground*, is a thoughtful collection of carefully rendered love songs that soothe like a balm. It's a more personal album than *Painted Tiles*, her 2006 debut—by her own description, it's "confident in its vulnerability"—and on a handful of tunes it uses borrowed lyrics for inspiration. The title track pulls from Paul Verlaine's poem "L'Amour

par Terre," which Tshilds says she was drawn to for its "beautiful imagery of a statue of Cupid blown to the ground," she explains. If that visual is severe, Tshilds's tender voice is disarming, and she elegantly contrasts the words with her gentle delivery. She draws on another French poet, Charles Baudelaire, on the haunting yet seductive "Sisina," layering her vocals into a moody tapestry framed by Sam Wagster's swooning pedal-steel guitar. The poetry of St. Francis of Assisi guides album highlight "Lemon Orchard," which billows with gauzy harmonies that circle the cooling refrain "I have to wring out the light when I get home." To celebrate her new self-release, Tshilds is joined by her band, which includes Wagster, Elise Bergman, Gillian Lisee, and Joe Adamik, as well as album guests Becker, Douglas McCombs, Marydee Reynolds, and Holly Stevens. Local song man Tim Kaiser opens, joined by his Axis: Sova bandmate Jeremy Freeze as well as Josh Johannpeter, Dan Browning, Kent Lambert, and Jeanine O'Toole.

—AREIF SLESS-KITAIN

THURSDAY20

MAKO SICA Traysh and TALsounds open. 9 PM, Sleeping Village, 3734 W. Belmont, \$8, \$5 in advance. 21+

Since it opened two years ago, Sleeping Village has become a hub for some of the city's best (and most affordable) local shows. A fine example is this concert, headlined by Chicago underground stalwarts **Mako Sica**. They've been at it since 2007, with core members Przemysław Drązek (formerly of intense rockers Rope) and Brent Fuscaldo steering the band's expansive ship. Drummers and collaborators, including legendary percussionist Hamid Drake, have come and gone over their numerous LP releases (via adventurous labels such as La Société Expéditionnaire, Feeding Tube, and Permanent), but Mako Sica have always retained a certain fluid consistency in their sound. They travel in spacey, often dissonant soundscapes; Fuscaldo's airy vocals and primordial, rhythmic guitar and bass guide the way, perfectly complementing Drązek's delayed, psychedelic guitar and trumpet excursions, which can make the music feel like the soundtrack of an obscure, heady film. Mako Sica have recently added drummer Jacob Fawcett, who studied with free-improv legend and former Chicagoan Frank Rosaly, so you can expect a slightly jazzier approach and some new material from these prolific cosmonauts. Opening the show is Natalie Chami, who's been operating under the sobriquet **TALsounds** since 2009, exploring electroacoustic sonics in a solo setting or in collaboration with folks such as Brett Naucke and Whitney Johnson (aka Matchless). Using treated voice, synthesizers, and a variety of more mysterious devices, Chami resides at the forefront of avant-garde ambient experimentation. Also on the bill are **Traysh**, one of many bands to feature guerrilla booker, drummer, synth noodler, and scene mainstay Ben Baker Billington, who also plays as Quicksails and in a trio with guitarists Mark Shippy and Daniel Wyche. Billington is mostly known for his crazed yet nuanced drum-kit attack, and in Traysh he's joined by bass Svengali Andrew Scott Young and keyboardist Daniel Van Duerm for outre excursions whose gnarly, difficult sounds might test your strength of will. These artists are all leading lights of the local experimental scene, and for a mere \$5 ticket you too can contribute to this often overlooked but essential part of Chicago's musical tapestry. —STEVE KRAKOW

VADER *Abysmal Dawn, Hideous Divinity, Vitriol, and Blood of the Wolf* open. 6 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 2105 S. State, \$25, \$20 in advance. 17+

Polish death-metal legends Vader have seen many major world changes in their 35 years as a band, some of which have directly impacted their career. Following the fall of the Iron Curtain in the early 90s, for instance, they became the first Polish death-metal band to sign a record contract with a Western label. They've since been reliably prolific, bringing a sense of martial discipline to every track they lay down. On last year's *Thy Messenger* EP (Nuclear Blast), they package their talents for circle-pit thrash and sweeping, primal death into a neat bonbon of a release. The record includes a rerecording of the pile-driving title track from their 2000 album, *Lita*.



Mako Sica © COURTESY THE ARTIST

ny, that enhances the multiple-buzz-saw-orchestra quality of its guitar sound and perfecting its pummeling drums. Vader have a busy year ahead, with the release of their 16th studio full-length, *Solitude*

in *Madness*, on the horizon. Though they haven't announced a date yet, they've dropped the new single "Shock and Awe," with an official lyric video that's as gloriously retro in its flame effects as the song

is of-this-moment in its raw force. The album also includes "Emptiness" and "Despair" from *Thy Messenger*, and "Emptiness" is reportedly one of only two slow numbers—come ready to rumble at high speed. Vader are also planning anniversary events in celebration of their classic albums—*De Profundis* turns 25 this year—but I expect their set at this show to mix older tunes with previews of their upcoming material. Also on the bill are LA's solidly vicious Abysmal Dawn, Italy's cleverly horror-inspired Hideous Divinity, Portland's sadistic Vitriol, and Chicago's fantastically grand and crunchy Blood of the Wolf, who show off their blackened-death chops on the recent EP *III: Blood Legend*. —MONICA KENDRICK

FRIDAY 21

DORIAN ELECTRA Alice Longyu Gao and Umrü open. 7 PM, *Subterranean*, 2011 W. North, sold out. 🎧 All three artists DJ at a 10:30 PM afterparty at Emporium Wicker Park, 1366 N. Milwaukee, \$20. 21+

With their ruffled shirts, baggy Tripp pants, and signature painted-on mustache, Dorian Electra always look like they're ready for a goth meetup at the Renaissance Faire. The nonbinary pop star is all about being too much, and though they're still a relative newcomer, that energy has already earned them

a fervent indie-pop following. Electra's debut album, last year's *Flamboyant*, consists of 11 energetic hyperpop tracks that explore a wild array of sounds and subjects: The campy "Career Boy" satirizes cubicle culture, and "Live by the Sword" (cowritten by 100 Geecs' Dylan Brady) sounds like a backing track for an intergalactic joust. But the best example of Electra's maximalist style is the album's title track—an ode to going "all the way" that features over-the-top Auto-Tuned vocals, sweeping piano melodies, striking synth chords, and spicy whip cracks. The music video plays out like a Liberace fever dream: champagne, candelabras, sequins, and feathers abound, while Electra lounges in front of a roaring fire in a red silk robe. They've released videos for five *Flamboyant* tracks so far, and each is worth a watch; their songs are solid, and their sense of theatrics makes them even more fun. Electra's most recent tour involved dramatic fashion, backup dancers, and crowd surfing—they even hired two sword fighters to serve as an opening act in London. This show offers another chance to spend an evening in Electra's dreamy, chaotic world. —MEGAN KIRBY

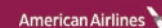
MUSA REEMS Rich Jones headlines; Mykele Deville, David Ashley, Musa Reems, and DJ Skoli open. 10 PM, *Subterranean*, 2011 W. North, \$10. 21+

Chicago rapper-singer Rich Jones brought his multi-generational monthly hip-hop series All Smiles to a

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Pissed Jeans play at Music Frozen Dancing. © EBUR YILDIZ

continued from 35

close in April 2019, but its spirit lives on at this Subterranean show he's headlining. The bill includes great local MCs who might not otherwise have any reason to cross paths, beginning with up-and-comer Musa Reems. On his recent self-released EP, November's *To Whom It May Concern*, he speeds through hard verses atop sleepy synths and snaggled-toothed percussion; he enlivens "Zombies" (which features Chicago great Mick Jenkins) by switching between thick staccato bars and quick stanzas of rhymes. I imagine Reems will have more music coming out soon, including what he's been making with new multi-city hip-hop collective Dumb Intelligence, which also includes both members of Free Snacks. Also on the lineup is gifted storyteller David Ashley; this is one of the first local shows he's performed since dropping his latest album, *Deep Down Inside* (Helpful Music), in September. Ashley's songs combine dry vocals, understated delivery, and flair for grimy, warped instrumentals, and he can impart his briefest narratives with affecting pathos. On his January single, "Plight," he confronts Black death and drug abuse via raps that corkscrew through dreamy synths, and his performance brings an air of hard-won triumph to an otherwise bleak song. —LEOR GALIL

AMALEA TSHILDS See *Pick of the Week*, page 34. Tim Kaiser opens. 8:30 PM, Constellation, 3111 N. Western, \$15. 18+.

SATURDAY22

MUSIC FROZEN DANCING Hot Snakes headline; Pissed Jeans, Hide, Crash Course in Science, the Hecks, and Hitter open. 1 PM, Empty Bottle (outside), 1035 N. Western. 🎫 FREE

Chicago has grown into a full-on hub for summer music festivals. We're home to some of the biggest and most beloved fests on the planet, and every

weekend from late spring to early fall you can find outdoor music happening on city streets big and small. But why should the warm months get all the fun? Six years ago, the folks at the Empty Bottle had the genius idea to host some bands outdoors in the frigid cold of February, and what seemed like a sure-fire bomb has grown into one of their most popular annual events. This year's Music Frozen Dancing features the biggest lineup yet, with a mix of bona fide indie-rock legends and excellent local acts. Headlining the show are iconic posthardcore band Hot Snakes (keeping the momentum going on their reunion stint), and also high on the bill are Pennsylvania noise-rock mainstays Pissed Jeans and resurrected postpunk band Crash Course in Science. The locals include noisy industrial goth duo Hide (not a band you'd expect to see performing in broad daylight), prog-pop outfit the Hecks, and scuzz-rockers Hitter. The show takes place right next to the Bottle on Cortez—and in case it gets too cold out there, the inside bar stays open the entire time.

—LUCA CIMARUSTI

SUNDAY23

MOUNTAINS FOR CLOUDS Joie de Vivre and Harold. open. 9 PM, Sleeping Village, 3734 W. Belmont, \$12, \$10 in advance. 21+

In 2013 mathy Chicago emo band Mountains for Clouds dropped their debut album, *Maybe It's Already Everywhere*, just as the scene underwent major changes. Fourth-wave emo was on the rise, and went on to become the toast of indie rock: emerging bands started selling out midsize venues that reunited indie-rock veterans often struggled to fill, and several fourth-wave groups issued era-defining albums, among them the Hotelier, the World Is a Beautiful Place, and Foxing. But by the end of the decade, that wave had crested and broken and a new set of bands were setting the pace—Origami Angel's hyperactive pop punk, Glass Beach's jittery symphonic indie pop, and Dogleg's

MUSIC



Justin Roberts TODD ROSENBERG

road-burning rock were beginning to take hold. In this new era, Mountains for Clouds' relaxed but galloping guitar loops and languid, intimate melodies can either feel antiquated or come across as distinctive and idiosyncratic, depending on your perspective. On their new second album, *Anxious & Aware* (Count Your Lucky Stars), the three-piece prove they've lost none of their skill at wringing emotion out of bittersweet guitars. On the lumbering "Rememory," front man Andrew Stefano sweetly intones lyrics about aging, self-doubt, and memory atop a stately shoegaze riff; the song's quietest moments enhance its reflective mood, and make growing old sound like getting better. —LEOR GALIL

HOT SNAKES See *Music Frozen Dancing* on Saturday. *Pink Avalanche* opens. 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle, 1035 N. Western, \$30. 21+

JUSTIN ROBERTS & THE NOT READY FOR NAPTIME PLAYERS 10:30 AM, Old Town School of Folk Music, Maurer Concert Hall, 4544 N. Lincoln, \$13-\$15.

Since 1997, Evanston indie rocker Justin Roberts has built a deep discography of children's music that treats listeners of all ages with respect. He first got an inkling that he wanted to make originals for kids while teaching at Step by Step Montessori in Minneapolis in the early 90s, and he's since become an unusual type of star in children's music: though he didn't have kids himself, his ability to speak to them through music has earned him three Grammys for his independently released albums. Roberts became a father for the first time in 2018, and on his 15th solo album, the brand-new *Wild Life*, he reflects on his newfound responsibilities with the same gentle care he takes when he describes our complicated world to young kids. He sings about his wondrous curiosity about his child's possible future ("Maybe She'll Have Curly Hair") and the queasy mix of trepidation and pride he experienced when his child began to show some independence ("When You First Let Go"),

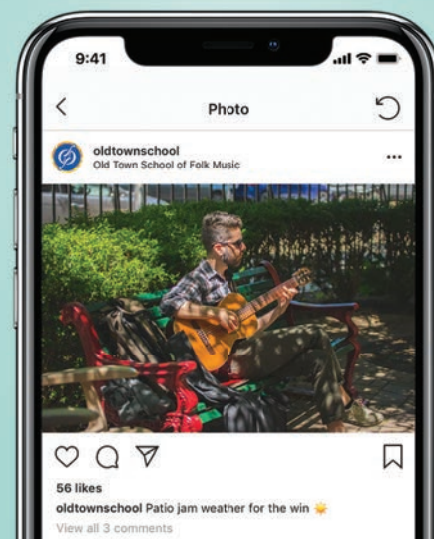
approaching these complex emotions with a welcoming tenderness that validates the experiences of parenthood. To help him color these plush yet minimal lullabies, he recruited a group of old and new collaborators: Eighth Blackbird pianist Lisa Kaplan, Flat Five vocalist Nora O'Connor, Robbie Fulk's drummer Gerald Dowd, and cellist Anna Steinhoff (who's also Roberts's wife). With *Wild Life*, Roberts uses the same musical approach he takes with his children's songs to reach adult ears, whether they belong to parents or to people who've never wanted kids: when the buoyant "Heart Like a Door" reaches its symphonic climax, it sounds as lovely as an indie-rock classic. —LEOR GALIL

MONDAY24

OREN AMBARCHI, CRYSS COLE Part of the Frequency Festival. 8:30 PM, Constellation, 3111 N. Western, \$20, \$17 in advance. 18+

Sound artists **Oren Ambarchi** and Crys Cole have both had thrilling careers. Ambarchi has run experimental label Black Truffle for more than a decade, and he's collaborated with a wide array of avant-garde luminaries, including Sunn O))), Keiji Haino, and Keith Rowe and John Tilbury (both veterans of long-running UK improvising group AMM). Last year, the Australian musician released the resplendent solo LP *Simian Angel* (on Austrian label Editions Mego) right in the middle of summer, which felt like perfect timing: its two long-form pieces invoke hot, humid weather. "Palm Sugar Candy" weaves conga, guitar, and gauzy synths into a meditative tableau, inviting listeners to soak in every curious melody and texture. **Crys Cole**, born in Canada and based in Berlin, has also taken part in impressive collaborations over the past decade, including the duo Ora Clementi with Australian composer James Rushford, but her solo albums are some of her most exciting. Like *Simian Angel*, her upcoming *Beside Myself* (Students of Decay) features two pieces that each take up a full side of an LP. "The Nonsuch" is inspired by

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WITH WIRE DJS

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@ REGGIE'S
THE TOSSERS
THE AVONDALE RAMBLERS
THE SIDERUNNERS

WEDNESDAY MAR 25 / 9PM / 21+
@ SLEEPING VILLAGE
HARU NEMURI

THURSDAY MAR 26 / 7PM / ALL AGES
PUSSY RIOT
DELI GIRLS

SATURDAY MAR 28 / 8PM / 18+
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POWERTRIP: A CELEBRATION
NEBULA / SILVERTOMB

TUESDAY MAR 31 / 7PM / ALL AGES
Riot Fest welcomes
(SANDY) ALEX G
EMPATH

THURSDAY APR 02 / 9PM / 18+
DAN DEACON
ED SCHRADER'S MUSIC BEAT

FRIDAY APR 03 / 9PM / 18+
DRAMA
RIC WILSON

APR 04 URBANITE XIII
APR 10 THY ART IS MURDER
@ REGGIE'S
APR 10 MAYHEM & ABBATH
APR 11 COCOROSIE
APR 11 EMO NIGHT BROOKLYN
APR 17 SQUAREPUSHER
APR 18 NIGHTMARES ON WAX
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MUSIC

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Jacob Wick GUDINNI CORTINA

continued from 37

aural hallucinations and conjures its queasy atmosphere with squabbling electronics, field recordings, ASMR-like vocalizing, and unidentifiable noises, all of which combine to give it a hypnotic, inscrutable mystique. The artists will each play a solo set to kick off Chicago's annual Frequency Festival, booked by former *Reader* music critic Peter Margasak as an extension of his year-round series. Ambarchi will improvise with a guitar, a Leslie cabinet (an amplifier that uses rotating horns or drums to produce tremolo with a literal Doppler effect), and other electronics; Cole will present an electroacoustic set combining live and prerecorded elements. Her goal, she says, is to induce listeners to focus deeply on the music, such that their perceptions of space and time are altered. Given that the Frequency Festival is known for highlighting the most exciting artists in forward-thinking music, it couldn't have chosen two better acts to kick off its 2020 edition. —**JOSHUA MINSOO KIM**

received ideas (about how a trumpet sounds, about how long a phrase can last), he also invites listeners to develop an awareness that everything around them needs to be understood on its own terms, not according to assumptions about what's expected. For his first Chicago appearance in almost two years, Wick will first play solo, then with drummer Phil Suderberg. Their 2019 collaborative tape, *Combinatory Pleasures* (Astral Spirits), engages pithiness as rigorously as the trumpeter's solos do duration. One prescription guides their otherwise wide-open improvisations: as soon as the music they're playing approaches definition, they stop. —**BILL MEYER**

MAN OR ASTRO-MAN? Wray opens. 9 PM, *Sleeping Village*, 3734 W. Belmont, \$17, \$15 in advance. 21+

There's a difference between surf and instrumental rock—not every rock 'n' roll tune without a vocal is surf. The likes of Duane Eddy, Link Wray, and even Booker T. & the MGs have all been mistaken for surf artists, but none of them have had that “wet” reverb sound favored by west-coast guitarists such as Dick Dale and Dave Myers. However, Man or Astro-Man?—who emerged out of Auburn, Alabama, in the 90s—blur the line that divides those two traditions (and they've occasionally used vocals too). Taking cues from classic surf and the Ventures' echo-effect-laden 1964 album *The Ventures in Space*, they go far beyond retro nostalgia, incorporating punk attitude, modern synths and sound-effect machines, and dramatic samples (including snippets of Spider-Man storybook records and “control room” dialogue from science-fiction serials). At their shows, the band members wear space suits and assume extraterrestrial identities, and they've been known to send other musicians out on the road as their “clones.” Except for a brief hiatus in the early 2000s, Man or Astro-Man? have remained in orbit, continuing to find new angles without stagnating or bastardizing their sound. Their most recent album, 2013's Steve Albini-produced *Defcon 5...4...3...2...1*, prominently features hard power chords and often recalls Davie Allan's soundtracks to 1960s biker movies. All props to any band who would dare take a Harley-Davidson into outer space. —**JAMES PORTER**

TUESDAY25

JACOB WICK *Part of the Frequency Festival.*
6:30 PM, Museum of Contemporary Art, 220 E. Chicago. FREE

Trumpeter Jacob Wick grew up in the Chicago area and now lives in Mexico City. Like his contemporaries Birgit Ulher, Peter Evans, Axel Dörner, and Nate Wooley, he employs extended techniques that enable him to produce sounds very different from conventional brass playing. His vocabulary encompasses coarse-grained ribbons of frayed wind, rhythmic puffs that resemble a steam engine in action, fluttering snatches of nascent melody, and the occasional brazen trad-jazz lick; with his command of circular breathing, he can keep a steady stream of sound going for upwards of 20 minutes. But he's not interested in merely wowing people with musical prowess; particularly in solo performances, such as those captured on the 2019 LP *Feel* (Thin Wrist), he invites audiences to step into his shoes and experience things queerly. In the LP's liner notes, he describes his ideal performance as a process: “queer sound—>queer time—>queer space.” By challenging



GOSSIP WOLF

A furry ear to the ground of the local music scene

SINCE MOVING here from Cincinnati in 2009, drummer **Jeremy Cunningham** has anchored several local ensembles, including orchestral jazz squad **Resavoir** and a crack quartet with guitarist Jeff Parker, bassist Paul Bryan, and saxophonist Josh Johnson—which is also the core group on most of his solo album **The Weather Up There**, due Friday, February 28, via **Northern Spy**. The album celebrates his brother Andrew, killed in a home invasion robbery in 2008; in a short documentary about the project, Cunningham says, “It’s helpful to reconnect with the whole of a person’s life, and not just the worst thing.” *The Weather Up There* creates a nuanced portrait of Andrew as it drifts between soulful, loping grooves and recordings of family members discussing the effects of gun violence. On Saturday, February 22, Cunningham’s quartet plays a release show at **Constellation**; also on the bill are poet Mykele Deville and a duo of Resavoir members Akenya Seymour and Will Miller.

The video art of genderqueer punk performer and artist **Vaginal Davis** is showing at the **Art Institute of Chicago** until April, and the local **Black, Brown, and Indigenous Crew** are throwing a BIPOC punk show at the Art Institute’s **Chicago Stock Exchange Trading Room** that testifies to Davis’s legacy in another, equally powerful way! On Friday, February 21, **Blacker Face**, the **Breathing Light**, **Mermaid N.V.**, the **Uhuruverse**, and **YGSLRHSTFUT** will tear the roof off; admission is free, but you must preregister via the Art Institute’s website.

Gossip Wolf first heard local singer, songwriter, multi-instrumentalist, and Intonation Music Workshop instructor **Wyatt Waddell** last year. He’d posted a few songs on Bandcamp and Soundcloud, and his debut single, 2018’s “**Cyber Eyes**,” uses a knockout combo of languid guitar riffs, flamboyant bass, funky keys, and relaxed soul vocals. On Thursday, February 20, he plays a free show upstairs at **Schubas** as part of the monthly Behind the Scene series. —J.R. NELSON AND LEOR GALIL

Got a tip? Tweet @Gossip_Wolf or e-mail gossipwolf@chicagoreader.com.

WOLF BY KEITH HERZIK

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NEW

Accidentals 4/22, 8 PM, Chop Shop **AL**

Agnostic Front, Sick of it All 5/3, 8 PM, Subterranean, 17+
American Aquarium 7/3, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, on sale Fri 2/21, 10 AM, 18+

... And You Will Know Us by the Trail of Dead, **Greenbeard** 4/27, 9:30 PM, Empty Bottle

Avantist, Speed Babes 3/10, 9:15 PM, Empty Bottle

Bad Examples 5/29, 9 PM, FitzGerald’s, Berwyn, on sale Fri 2/21, 11 AM

Brendan Benson 5/6, 9:30 PM, Empty Bottle, on sale Fri 2/21, 10 AM

Big Sandy & His Fly-Rite Boys 8/28, 8:30 PM, FitzGerald’s, Berwyn, on sale Fri 2/21, 11 AM

Bongzilla, Something is Waiting, Plague of Carcosa, Psychic Nurse 3/12, 8 PM, Reggie’s Music Joint

Braids 6/4, 9:15 PM, Empty Bottle

Wayne Baker Brooks 2/28, 10 PM, SPACE, Evanston **AL**

Chopin in the City Festival presents Loose Assembly Trio with Mike Reed, Peter Cheslie Quartet 2/27, 8:30 PM, Constellation, 18+

Dead & Company 7/24-7/25, 6:30 PM, Wrigley Field A

DLC Music Chicago, Kid Yuki & the Otakus, DLC: Hot Club 2/29, 8 PM, Reggie’s Music Joint

Flat Five 3/27, 8 PM, FitzGerald’s, Berwyn

Flor De Toloache 4/17, 9 PM, Sleeping Village

Flux Pavilion 4/23, 7 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+

Ginger Root 3/13, 7:30 PM, Subterranean, 17+

Goodie Mob 5/8, 9 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+

Sam Hunt, Kip Moore, Travis Denning, Ernest 6/20, 7 PM, Hollywood Casino Amphitheatre, Tinley Park **AL**

Jenny Hval 4/2, 8 and 10:30 PM, Constellation, 18+

Gregory Alan Isakov, Leif Vollebekk 6/10-6/11, 8 PM, Fourth Presbyterian Church of Chicago **AL**

Al Jardine 3/31, 8 PM, City Winery **AL**

Joywave 5/16, 8 PM, Metro, on sale Fri 2/21, 10 AM **AL**

Aaron Kamm & the One Drops, Concrete Roots 2/29, 9 PM, Schubas

Kind Country, Julian Davis & the Situation 3/19, 8 PM, GMan Tavern

Last Bandoeros 4/15, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston **AL**

Dennis J. Leise 4/9, 8:30 PM, FitzGerald’s, Berwyn, on sale Fri 2/21, 11 AM

Lucky Chops 3/6, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+

Melkbelly, Facs, CB Radio 4/4, 9 PM, Sleeping Village

Mija, Foxy Panic 2/28, 9 PM, Schubas, 18+

Milky Chance 6/12, 7:30 PM, Riviera Theatre **AL**

Mohsen Namjoo 5/30, 8 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music **AL**

Nielsen Trust featuring Rick Nielsen, Scott Lucas 4/3, 7 PM, Chop Shop, 18+

Nobody’s Girl 8/20, 8 PM, FitzGerald’s, Berwyn, on sale Fri 2/21, 11 AM

Numero Group presents Whispers Lounge featuring DJ sets by Dave Hoekstra, Rob Sevier, and more 3/5, 5 PM, Dorian’s

Off Days, Fundamental Kink, Broken Robots 3/18, 8 PM,

Schubas **FREE**
Bobby Oroza 3/29, 9:15 PM, Empty Bottle, on sale Fri 2/21, 10 AM

Orphan the Poet, Deal Casino 3/14, 7 PM, Subterranean, 17+

Pretty Reckless, Them Evils 5/19, 8:30 PM, Bottom Lounge, on sale Fri 2/21, 17+

Purity Ring 5/26, 7:30 PM, Riviera Theatre **AL**

Rascal Flatts, Chase Rice 6/25, 7:30 PM, Hollywood Casino Amphitheatre, Tinley Park, on sale Fri 2/21, 10 AM **AL**

Receiving End of Sirens, Envy on the Coast 5/20, 7 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+

Jessica Risker, Bea Troxel 3/18, 9 PM, Hungry Brain

Ruby Haunt 6/7, 9:15 PM, Empty Bottle

Sheer Terror, Carnivore A.D., Insult to Injury, Shitizens 3/6, 7 PM, Reggie’s Rock Club, 18+

Shellac, Loki’s Folly 3/10-3/11, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall

Corky Siegel’s Chamber Blues featuring Ernie Watts, Goran Ivanovic 3/1, 7 PM, City Winery **AL**

Jeff Swanson & Case-Fitter, Miss Remember, Stu Mindeman/Juan Pastor duo 3/1, 8:30 PM, Sleeping Village

Sword, King Buffalo 7/1, 9:30 PM, Empty Bottle, on sale Fri 2/21, 10 AM

John Tate/Tony Malaby/Dave Miller/Charles Rumbach 3/1, 9 PM, Hungry Brain

Thinkin’ Big 4/1, 7:30 PM, SPACE, Evanston **AL**

This Wild Life 6/13, 8 PM, Bottom Lounge, on sale Fri 2/21, 10 AM **AL**

Toastamania X featuring Extinction A.D., Paralysis, Deterioration, Nemesis, Insinnerator, Voice of God, Mrsa, Deathrun, Democide, Infowars 6/20, 1 PM, Reggie’s

Music Joint
Too Free, Drea the Vibe Dealer 4/2, 8:30 PM, Co-Prosperity Sphere, 18+

Jeff Tweedy 5/15-5/16, 7:30 PM, the Vic, on sale Fri 2/21, 10 AM, 18+

Urbanite XXIII: Chicago Dance Showcase presented by Roswell Curates & 2XS 4/4, 10 PM, Metro, 18+

Vale of Pnath, Gorod, Wolf King, Roman Ring, Triguana 3/4, 7 PM, Reggie’s Rock Club, 17+

Woody, Machine Listener, Kona FM 2/29, 11:59 PM, Hideout

ZZ Ward, Patrick Droney 3/12, 8 PM, House of Blues, 17+

Tom West 3/24, 8 PM, City Winery **AL**

Hilary Woods 4/14, 8 PM, International Museum of Surgical Science

Sarah Marie Young Quartet 2/27, 7:30 and 9:30 PM, Winter’s Jazz Club

UPDATED

Hayley Kiyoko 2/28, 8 PM, Aragon Ballroom, canceled, refunds available at point of purchase

La Roux 11/17, 7:30 PM, Park West, date changed, tickets purchased for 3/13 will be honored **AL**

Rage Against the Machine 5/19-5/20, 8 PM, United Center, 5/20 show added A

UPCOMING

Barn Dance Apocalypse featuring Golden Horse Ranch Band 2/29, 8 PM, Irish American Heritage Center

Marc E. Bassy, Gianni & Kyle 3/1, 7:30 PM, Lincoln Hall A

Baynk, Austin Millz, Nolie 2/28, 9 PM, Bottom Lounge, 18+

Bear Hands, Irontom 3/12, 8 PM, Subterranean, 17+

Begonia 3/7, 9 PM, Schubas, 18+

Best Coast, Mannequin Pussy 3/11, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+

Black Lips, Poppy Jean Crawford, Les Strychnine 3/5, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+

Black Mass with DJ Stephanie Marlow, DJ Kevin Leary 3/1, noon, Empty Bottle **FREE**

Black Pumas 3/25, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+

Blanks 3/16, 7:30 PM, Schubas **AL**

Blind Stagers 2/29, 9 PM, Beat Kitchen

Dave Hause & the Mermaid, Indianola 3/6, 8 PM, Sleeping Village

Sierra Hull, Jodee Lewis 2/27, 8 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music **AL**

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Hunny, Bay Faction, Mundy’s Bay 3/22, 8 PM, Subterranean, 17+

Ides of March featuring Jim Peterik 3/4, 8 PM, City Winery **AL**

Ike Reilly Assassination 3/20, 8:30 PM, FitzGerald’s, Berwyn

Brian McKnight, Tevin Campbell, El DeBarge, Res 3/28, 8 PM, Wintrust Arena **AL**

Anna Meredith 3/15, 8:30 PM, Co-Prosperity Sphere, 18+

Michigan Rattlers 3/12, 8 PM, Martyr’s

Microwave, Elder Brother, Save Face, Dogleg 3/20, 7 PM, Bottom Lounge **AL**

Midnight, Savage Master, Rotten 3/27, 10 PM, Empty Bottle

Moneybagg Yo, Fredo Bang, 42 Dugg, Blacc Zacc 3/22, 7:30 PM, the Vic, 18+

Typhanie Monique 3/29, 7 PM, SPACE, Evanston **AL**

Monster Magnet, Nebula, Silvertomb 3/28, 8 PM, Metro, 18+

Nektar 3/1, 7 PM, Reggie’s Rock Club, 17+

Haru Nemuri 3/25, 9 PM, Sleeping Village

Palehound, Adult Mom 3/21, 9 PM, Schubas, 18+

Pathology, Pyrexia, Septicemic, Virulent Excision, Vile Secretion 3/7, 8 PM, Cobra Lounge, 17+

Perpetual Groove 3/27-3/28, 8 PM, Chop Shop, 18+

Spacebones, Woes, Cold Beaches, Engine Summer 3/5, 8 PM, Chop Shop, 18+

Speak Low, Kayak Jones, Super American 3/5, 7 PM, Beat Kitchen, 17+

Damo Suzuki’s Network 3/19, 9:30 PM, Empty Bottle

Sweet Cobra, Rlyr, Salvation 3/21, 9:30 PM, Sleeping Village

Mayo Thompson 3/25, 8:30 PM, Constellation, 18+

Molly Tuttle 3/15, 7 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music **AL**

Underground Youth, Lorelle Meets the Obsolete 3/15, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle

Uniform & the Body, Dreamdecay 3/24, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle

Vetiver 3/27, 9 PM, Sleeping Village

Warish 3/2, 7 PM, Subterranean, 17+

Dale Watson 3/26, 8:30 PM, FitzGerald’s, Berwyn

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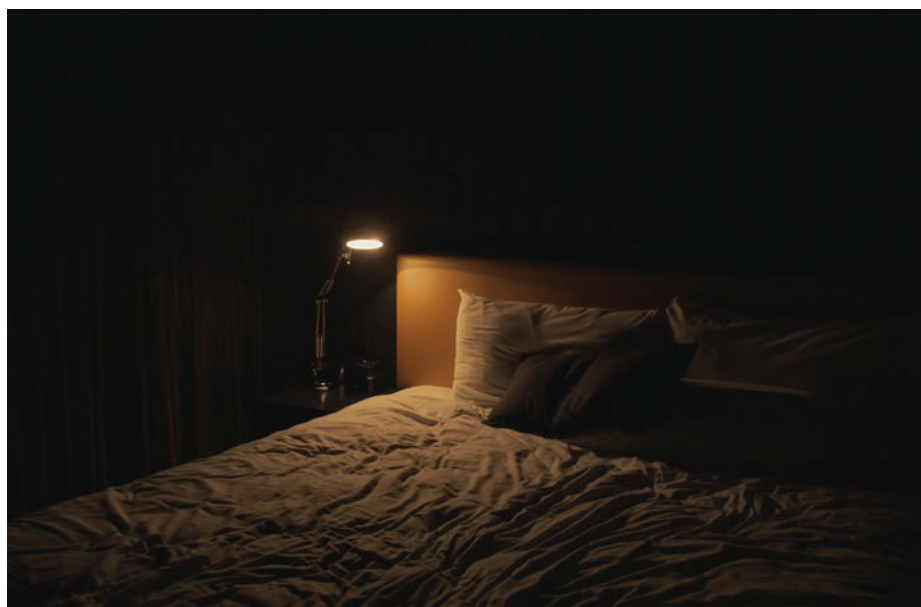


*Dukmasova will just co-host the March 3 event.



READER

OPINION



SAVAGE LOVE

Delayed ejaculation is really kind of a superpower

Don't worry, humping your mattress hasn't ruined you.

By **DAN SAVAGE**

Q: I'm 20, straight, male, fit, and active. I masturbated prone—flat on my stomach—for years. I've now changed to a more traditional position (on my back or sitting upright), and I'm using my hand rather than grinding against a mattress. I can easily orgasm when I masturbate. I've had sex four times in my life, and I'm worried because I wasn't able to orgasm by someone else's hand, through oral, or during penetration. I felt more sensation with oral or by hand than I did during intercourse, but I wasn't able to get off. This is extremely worrying, and I am increasingly depressed. Am I broken? Is my sex life ruined? —**BOY REELING OVER KAPUT EQUIPMENT**

A: You're not broken, BROKE, and your partnered sex life, which has barely begun, isn't ruined. Even if you're never able to come by someone

else's hand, mouth, twat, or ass—and that's the worst-case scenario here—you can still have a rewarding and pleasurable sex life.

In the short run, BROKE, you need to be honest with your sex partners about the way your cock currently works. Let them know you're going to be mixing some manual self-stimulation in with the vaginal/oral/anal penetration. In other words, at some point you're going to pull out of whatever you're in, you're going to jerk it until you reach the point of "orgasmic inevitability" (OI), aka that split second between the start of orgasmic contractions and the good stuff spurting out, and then you're going to put it back in. Since most women need to mix direct clitoral stimulation with penetration (or in place of it) in order to get off—before, during, after, or instead of intercourse—your honesty about what you actually need to get off will

signal to your female partners that they can be honest with you about what they actually need to get off.

Backing way the hell up: The way you used to masturbate—prone—is likely the reason you're having difficulty climaxing now. But lots of men who masturbated in more "traditional positions" have trouble transitioning to partnered sex from solo sex. The inside of a mouth, vagina, or butt doesn't feel like your own hand (or a long-suffering mattress, in your case), and even someone else's hand doesn't feel the same as your own. While the excitement of partnered sex helps most guys get over the hump—for many men, it takes time and a little experimentation for their cocks to adapt. But men who engaged in "atypical masturbatory behaviors" as boys—and prone masturbation/humping a mattress counts—frequently have a harder transition to partnered

OPINION

JP VALERY / UNSPLASH

sex.

There's a name for what you're experiencing: delayed ejaculation. And while delayed ejaculation can be frustrating, the opposite problem—premature ejaculation—is more frustrating and harder to work around. (I get a lot more letters from guys in despair because they come too quickly and too easily than I do from guys like you, BROKE, who take too long.) And, really, when you look at it from a different angle, your problem—being able to last forever—is really kind of a superpower. Because let's say you fuck some lucky woman for ages, and she gets off again and again because someone—you, her, a third—is stimulating her clit at the same time. Once she's satisfied (or shortly before she's satisfied), BROKE, you can pull out, jack yourself to OI, then put your cock back inside her and blow that load or take the condom off and blow your load—with her consent, of course—all over her ass or tits or stomach or Toyota Corolla or whatever.

But for your partner to feel like this is your superpower and she totally lucked out when she met you, BROKE, you can't leave her in the dark about the way your dick works. If you don't let your partner know you need to stroke yourself a little right before you come, she's likely to interpret your staying power (your superpower) as a sign you aren't attracted to her.

Now here's how you might be able to fix this in the long run, BROKE: When you're masturbating, you should . . . well, you should do what you're doing. Masturbate while sitting up or lying on your back, use your hand and a little lube, but do it with a much lighter touch/grip and maybe invest in a quality (read: silicone) masturbation sleeve. Don't use the death grip—don't squeeze

the life out of your dick—as that will make things worse. And while cutting back on porn and using your imagination instead is fine, the real goal is to retrain your cock to respond to subtler sensations. Which brings us to the hardest part: If you can't come after masturbating for 10, 20, or 30 minutes—using that light touch/grip, a little lube, and maybe that sleeve—you don't get to come. No flipping over and humping the mattress after half an hour, and no using a firmer grip. You put your dick away and go to bed or work or school. Because this is about focusing on pleasurable sensations, not blowing your load, and you want to let the pressure build in your balls between sessions.

Stick to these rules when you're on your own for at least six months. If your dick is able to adapt, it will, and then you can take your more sensitive dick into partnered sex with more confidence. But if after six months you're still not able to come using a lighter touch or a masturbation sleeve, you may have to accept that this—your need to get yourself to the point of OI during partnered sex—is the way your dick works. Just as some women need to use a vibrator in order to come, and that doesn't mean they're broken, some men—after giving and receiving a lot of pleasurable fucking—need to pull out, jack to the point of OI, and then plunge back in for the last few victory pumps. It doesn't mean they're broken, it doesn't mean their dicks are broken, and it certainly doesn't mean their sex lives are over. As sexual superpowers go, BROKE, it's a pretty decent one to have.

Finally: I just reread a paper on traumatic masturbatory syndrome (TMS) that was published in the *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy* back in 1998—which I think was before you were born (math is hard)—and it identified prone masturbation as the primary

cause of delayed ejaculation. To prevent TMS, delayed ejaculation, and other forms of erectile dysfunction that prone masturbation can lead to, the authors recommended “masturbatory instruction in the home, classroom, or pediatric clinical setting.” If their advice had been taken—if boys were advised, as one aspect of a comprehensive sex-education program, to avoid humping mattresses or placing their penises between mattresses and box springs—far fewer young men would have the problem you're having now.

Q: I've been seeing a guy for two years. It was a FWB situation from the start, because he already had a girlfriend. I adore him, we quickly broke the rules (L-word spoken on both sides), but the B part has dwindled to nothing. We haven't had PIV sex since September, and he just added a second FWB to the mix. He swears he's attracted to me and says we aren't having sex—with the exception of me blowing him from time to time—because he's older. But I know for a fact the other two women are getting some. He says he's attracted to me—so why doesn't he want sex? How do I make him see how much I need him without issuing ultimatums? —SCARED BUT HORNY

A: Your FWB might come through with a little PIV if you issued that ultimatum, SBH, but it sure doesn't sound like he's going to fuck you short of one. You might be able to get this guy to quite literally throw you a bone, but I think your time would be better spent finding a new FWB. **[F]**

Send letters to mail@savagelove.net. Download the Savage Lovecast Tuesday at savagelovecast.com.
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Slalom has multiple openings for the following positions at its Chicago, IL office (multiple types/levels):
- **SOLUTIONS ARCHITECTS** [Job code KB133]: Lead all aspects of testing on client projects of medium to large size & complexity.
- **TECHNOLOGY CONSULTANTS** [Job code RU003]: Develop, create & modify general computer applications software including Salesforce suite apps according to client-specific needs. Must be available to work on projects at various, unanticipated sites throughout the U.S. & abroad. TO APPLY: Email resume to recruithr@slalom.com & indicate appropriate job code.

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Quicket Solutions, Inc. is seeking a Senior Software Architect in Chicago, IL w/ the following responsibilities: design & build advanced test-driven apps for Android & Windows WPF .NET Framework. Plse email your resume to careers@quicket.com. Please ref 071592 in the subject line.

SCIENCE: Kraft Heinz Foods Company seeks Sr. Analyst, Quality - Food Safety to work in Glenview, IL & support the implementation and execution of key microbiology and food safety programs within a specific business unit. Degree & commensurate exp. req'd. Apply online: kraftheinzcompany.com/applyNA.html at #R-25469

Groupion, Inc. is seeking a Senior Data Analyst in Chicago, IL w/ the following responsibilities: create & maintain data warehouse jobs

to help generate/maintain database tables & up to 5% travel req'd. Apply at www.groupioncareers.com by searching keyword R23153

Network Objects, Inc. has multiple openings at multiple levels for the following positions:

Combo of education, training and experience equiv. to Bachelor's + 2yrs exp/equiv.: SAP SD Pricing Consultant V (NSPCV19): SAP SD, Pricing, Rebates, Order management, ABAP, Vistex.

Master's + 2yrs/Bachelor's +5yrs exp/equiv.: .Net/SharePoint Developer II (NNDI19): .NET Framework, C#, SharePoint, WebServices, SQL Server/Oracle, Azure, SharePoint Designer, WebParts. **SAP HANA Consultant (NSHANA19):** HANA, ABAP, SQL Script, JavaScript, Python, C, C++, Java, Oracle, MySQL, Linux. **SAP SD Functional Analyst II (NSFA19):** SAP SD, CS, GTS, SAP-EDI, SD-MM, ABAP. **SAP SD Pricing Consultant II (NSAPCP19):** SAP SD, Pricing, Rebates, Order management, ABAP, Vistex. **SAP SD Solutions Architect II (NSSA19):** SAP SD, HP ALM, IBM Tivoli, FICO, ERP, Agile.

Mail resume with job ID to HR: 2300 Barrington Rd., Suite 400, Hoffman Estates, IL 60169. Unanticipated work site locations throughout U.S. Foreign equiv. accepted.

Test Engineer (Foot Locker Corporate Services, Inc.) (Chicago, IL): Rev business & functnl techl reqs in order to produce strategies & cases. Assist in building an automated testing framework for API layer, data validation & backend. Reqs Bach degree or foreign equiv in Comp Sci, Comp / Electronic Eng, Mgmt Info Sys, or a closely related field + five (5) years of progressively resp. exp testing large scale business apps. Exp must include: designing & developing automation test strategies using Waterfall, V, Iterative & Agile meths; working w/ softw dev life cycle (SDLC), softw testing life cycle (STLC) & defect life cycle

(DLC); working w/ selenium-web driver, Cucumber, Fitnesse, testing, Whiz servs testing, ReadyAPI, SoapUI, Postman, REST client mobile testing, Appium, Calabash performance testing, LoadUI, J-Meter and load-runner; working w/ OWASP-ZAP, Nessus & Metasploit design patterns, page object, page factory & Ruby; & working w/ MS Project, JIRA, Bugzilla, Spira, Trac, & Confluence protocols inclg SOAP, HTTP, HTTPS, SNMP, & LDAP. Send resumes to Foot Locker Corporate Services, Inc. Attn: M. Grund, Global Mobility & Compensation Coordinator, Code ZXCX, 330 W 34th Street, New York, NY 10001.

Systems Analyst: Responsible for design and implementation of client server and system applications, as well as overseeing application architecture development and production support. Park Ridge, IL. Send resume to Peterson Technology Partners, Inc., 1030 West Higgins Road, Suite 230, Park Ridge, IL 60068, Attn: J. Johnson.

TWO POSITIONS
Systems Analyst: Responsible for design and implementation of client server and system applications, as well as overseeing application architecture development and production support. Park Ridge, IL. Send resume to Peterson Technology Partners, Inc., 1030 West Higgins Road, Suite 230, Park Ridge, IL 60068, Attn: J. Johnson.

TransUnion Interactive, Inc. (a wholly owned subsidiary of TransUnion, LLC) seeks Sr. Analysts for Chicago, IL location to develop & evaluate analytical products. Master's in Applied Mathematics/ Machine Learning/Data Science/related Quantitative field + 2yrs exp. or Bachelor's in Applied Mathematics/ Machine Learning/Data Science/related Quantitative field + 5yrs exp. req'd. Skills Req'd: exp w/statistical modeling & data analysis using R, VBA; feature engineering, data visualization; performing data sampling, cleaning & preparation; education/exp. w/SQL, Python, Hadoop, Hive, Spark, Spark SQL, Command Line Interface, Predictive modelling, machine

learning, 20% telecommuting permitted. Send resume to: R. Harvey, REF: AB, 555 W. Adams St., Chicago, IL 60661

Social Justice Reporting Fellowship: The Chicago Reader is hiring a Social Justice Reporting Fellow to continue our award-winning news and investigative coverage. The ideal candidate will have news reporting experience, a nuanced understanding of the social justice issues our city confronts, and a commitment to social impact journalism. The yearlong, full-time fellowship will be based out of our office in Bronzeville. The Fellow will finish the year with an outstanding portfolio of clips and with the know-how to navigate different career paths in today's journalism ecosystem. The compensation package includes full benefits and a salary of \$38,000. Please send a resume, cover letter summarizing your experience and what makes you the ideal candidate, and clips—either as links or attachments—to careers@chicagoreader.com. The deadline for applications is 11:59 PM Friday, March 13. Diverse candidates are strongly encouraged to apply.

LEGAL NOTICES

Notice is hereby given, pursuant to "An Act in relation to the use of an Assumed Business Name in the conduct or transaction of Business in the State," as amended, that a certification was registered by the undersigned with the County Clerk of Cook County. Registration Number: Y20003125 on February 4, 2020 Under the Assumed Business Name of DIVINELY ORDERED LIFE CELEBRATIONS with the business located at 3265 W. PALMER STREET UNIT 2, CHICAGO, IL 60647. The true and real full name(s) and residence address of the owner(s)/partner(s) is: CYNTHIA-VAL CHAPMAN 3265 W. PALMER STREET UNIT 2, CHICAGO, IL 60647, USA

Notice is hereby given, pursuant to "An Act in relation to the use of an Assumed Business Name in the conduct or transaction of Business in the State," as amended, that a certification was registered by the undersigned with the County Clerk of Cook

County. Registration Number: Y20003121 on February 4, 2020 Under the Assumed Business Name of Salon V Rose with the business located at 6309 W. Diversey Ave., Chicago, IL, 60639. The true and real full name(s) and residence address of the owner(s)/partner(s) is: Susan Narvaez, 3404 W. Shakespeare, Chicago, IL, 60647

Notice is hereby given, pursuant to "An Act in relation to the use of an Assumed Business Name in the conduct or transaction of Business in the State," as amended, that a certification was registered by the undersigned with the County Clerk of Cook County. Registration Number: Y20003048 on January 22, 2020 Under the Assumed Business Name of GARRETT'S IRISH DANCE GOODS with the business located at 3640 N. KEDZIE AVE, CHICAGO, IL 60618. The true and real full name(s) and residence address of the owner(s)/partner(s) is: MARY LANGE 3640 N. KEDZIE AVE, CHICAGO IL 60618, USA

STATE OF ILLINOIS, PUBLICATION NOTICE OF COURT DATE FOR REQUEST FOR NAME CHANGE. Location Cook County

- County Division - Case Type: Name Change from Alberto Alonso Blasquez to Alberto Alonso. Court Date April 13, 2020, 9:30 AM in Courtroom #1706 Case # 2020CONC000200

STATE OF ILLINOIS, PUBLICATION NOTICE OF COURT DATE FOR REQUEST FOR NAME CHANGE. Location Cook County - County Division - Case Type: Name Change from JULIO RANGEL RIVERA JR to DeLuca Ethan Amasiano Court Date April 13, 2020, 9:30 AM in Courtroom #1706 Case # 2020CONC000222

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be awarded based on price and ability to perform work. All disadvantaged businesses should contact **RAGNAR BENSON attention Kasia Popa** at - estimating@rbic.com 312-764-6600 to discuss subcontracting opportunities. Please submit all bids no later than **February 27th, 2020 at 12PM**. The bid will be publicly opened by CTA on **February 28th, 2020 at 3:00PM**. For more information please contact us at 312-764-6600 or Email estimating@rbic.com.

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